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AGE OF WORMS ADVENTURE PATH

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Nicolas Logue
Tilagos Island does not appear on most maps of the Nyr Dyv, yet the storm-shrouded island hides the greatest repository of knowledge of an ancient cabal of druids who defeated Kyuss 1,500 years ago. An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 16th-level characters.

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ON THE COVER

Eric Deschamps gives us Juiblex, demon lord of slimes and oozes.

"In the gloom of the trees there seemed a constant menace, and as we looked up into their shadowy foliage vague terrors crept into one's heart. It is true that these monstrous creatures which we had seen were lumbering, inoffensive brutes which were unlikely to hurt anyone, but in this world of wonders what other survivals might there not be—what fierce, active horrors ready to pounce upon us from their lair among the rocks or brushwood?"

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
"The Lost World"

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DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of DUNGEON! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 4/30/06.

RPGA NETWORK

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Wingclipper's Revenge (132WR1DN)
Caverns of the Ooze Lord (132OL1DN)
The Library of Last Resort (132LR1DN)

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

This issue's Age of Worms Adventure Path installment sets the PCs on the path to the campaign's endgame, but in my personal Age of Worms game here at the office, they're only just leaving Diamond Lake. Freelance commitments, vacations, and the fact that I've got eight players who can't even agree on where to go to lunch have conspired to set us way back, and we're only now about to set out for the third adventure. Once I realized we had fallen hopelessly behind the pace of the magazine, I decided to take my time and pack as much fun into Diamond Lake as possible. Now that the PCs are about to leave I'm already feeling nostalgic.

Last time I brought you up to speed ("Only a DM Can Kill a Ninja," DUNGEON #129), DRAGON Associate Editor Mike McArtor's ineffective ninja Vyth took a dirt nap after an unfortunate encounter with the Faceless One, a cult leader dwelling in a subterranean temple under Diamond Lake. After regrouping in the "Guildhall," the run-down mining office outside the Whispering Cairn detailed in DRAGON #333, the party soon met Mike's replacement character, a middle-aged totem druid (DRAGON #335) with a white tiger animal companion. A brief role-playing encounter ensued, ending with the inevitable "You look trustworthy!" and an invitation to join the party.

After burying Vyth, the party decided to get even with one of their most hated enemies, a corrupt mine manager named Balabar Smenk who seemed to have his pudgy fingers in all of Diamond Lake's seedy criminal plots. Most importantly, Smenk had personally kidnapped Beaky, the party's baby owlbear mascot, while they were exploring the Whispering Cairn. All of them yearned for revenge. The players had not actually met or seen Smenk by this point, instead dealing with his arrogant agent, a bald human wizard named Merovinn Bask. From these encounters, they correctly suspected that Smenk was one of the most politically powerful criminals in town, and their boot-quaking planning sessions discussing how to bump him off filled hours of real time. Between sessions, I took care to develop Smenk's hideout

PHOTOS BY Sean Glenn

and pack it with appropriate servitors and guards. A dire ape here, a fighter there, and good old Merovinn Bask, advanced a couple of levels from his appearance in DUNGEON #124 and packed with a few nasty spells sure to put at least one of the PCs into negative hit points. I was ready.

Unfortunately for me, my players were ready too. In the end, after much planning, they decided (as almost all groups do) on a direct assault—bash down the door and kill, kill, kill. Ha ha, I laughed, as DRAGON Managing Editor Jason Bulmahn's dwarf triggered a *bestow curse* trap. Ho, ho, laughed Downer artist Kyle Hunter, gingerly handing the dwarf a *potion of remove curse* he'd thoughtfully purchased six sessions earlier. No problem, I though to myself. I still have Merovinn Bask! With all of the PCs in a helpful single-file line, I made ready to toast them with a well-placed *lightning bolt*. Jason's *bull-strengthed, enlarged, blessed,* charging, power-attacking dwarf beat him on initiative, and in one mighty swing of his axe he chopped my 15-hit point wizard in two, uncast *lightning bolt* and all.

Never fear, I thought to myself. I've seen the PCs before, and they are not going to be prepared to deal with Smenk's two dire apes! What I hadn't seen before, however, was Mike McArtor's new druid and his frighteningly efficient armored white tiger animal companion. The fearsome feline dispatched my dire apes with little risk, slicing them to ribbons with its powerful claws and teeth. The rabble of low-level warriors weren't going to slow down this freight train.

In a room around the corner, Balabar Smenk calmly chopped a paw off of Beaky as a final insult and began plotting his revenge. Still deep in the battle, the PCs heard only a high-pitched voice spoken through Smenk's flabby lips. "I'll be back!" he cried.

And next time, he (and I) will be ready.

ERIK

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Tell us what you think of this issue.

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DUNGEON #129

We caught some grief for putting a barfing dragon on the cover of our December issue, but the incredible traps and devious critters of "A Gathering of Winds," Wolfgang Baur's thrilling Age of Worms Adventure Path installment, made converts of many readers. The adventure returned to the Whispering Cairn where the campaign began, and by the end the PCs just might have earned a fragment of the fabled *Rod of Seven Parts*. I asked Wolf to give us the most horiffic 1st-edition-style dungeon crawl imaginable, and think he answered that challenge more than admirably. I can't wait to take my own players through it, although I'm sure they have a somewhat different perspective.

Newcomer Uri Kurlianchik brought us "Murder in Oakbridge," a popular mystery set in Eberron's City of Towers that offered a refreshing break from all the dungeon crawls we've been publishing lately, and the able Wil Upchurch dropped in with "The Twisted Run," a Forgotten Realms sequel to issue #103's "Forest of Blood." All in all, a very solid offering. Back issues of *Dungeon* #129 and dozens of other great issues are available at paizo.com.

Prison Mail

Campaign Workbook Does Good

I just wanted to say, as a DM, how much I appreciate the "Campaign Workbook" section of *Dungeon*. I have been reading *Dungeon* for longer than I can remember, and I think this is the most valuable series of columns you have ever run! Even if I do not find the particular issue's adventures useful, I always find a need for the Workbook. Please don't ever abridge or cancel this set of columns.

Eric McHenry
Queensbury, NY

The Campaign Workbook is the spine of the new format we introduced in Dungeon *#114, and we're very pleased with the success of the section to date. In fact, I get a little misty on the rare occasion when an adventure runs long and we need to cut the section down from its usual eight pages, since I feel the Campaign Workbook is a critical part of what we're trying to accomplish with the magazine. Not so long ago,* Dungeon *was a magazine for adventures, and really nothing else. The addition of the Campaign Workbook and Dungeoncraft subtly changed the focus of this magazine to covering ideas that make us better Dungeon Masters. Adventures are a key part of the process, of course, but there's more to running a game than reading from a script, and the articles at the back of the magazine give us the chance to play around in that territory. You can rest assured that the Campaign Workbook will last at least as long as the current staff does, and I hope a good deal longer.*

Remember the Delve?

Unlike many online Greyhawk fans, I have an interest and appreciation for the Forgotten Realms that stretches back to when the setting existed only in Ed Greenwood's articles in *Dragon*. Those were the days when fans weren't so fascist about which settings they liked and loathed, and DMs and players alike felt free to mix and match elements of the 'Realms with Greyhawk, the Grand Duchy of Karameikos, and home-brewed material.

I loved Eric Boyd's three-part dungeon series, "Vampires of Waterdeep," in issues #126–128. The series was well conceived, full of interesting challenges, and showcased interesting Realmslore. In particular, the excellent design of "The Dungeon of the Crypt" (issue #127) stood out: the dungeon map showed how levels can be designed for maximum defense when created by an intelligent NPC concerned about invasion. The use of secret doors, spy holes, and portcullises help to channel the PCs' activities and are taken advantage of by the level's inhabitants. The varied challenges and topography in different sections of the dungeon and the ability to explore beyond the borders of the map are also hallmarks reminiscent of some of the best dungeon levels (like the lower level of *G1: Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*). Great work, Eric!

In addition to the Waterdeep trilogy, I continue to enjoy the Age of Worms

Adventure Path, as well as Rob Kuntz's "Chambers of Antiquities" *Maure Castle* installment in DUNGEON #124. While I appreciate well-created FR materials, GREYHAWK remains my favorite setting, and it's great to see you support it so well. It was also nice to see Christopher West's Maps of Mystery return in issue #128. I'd love to see the rest of the Dungeon Delve map series that started in issues #109 and #111.

Allan Grohe
Via Email

Few authors bring the zeal and encyclopedic knowledge of Eric L. Boyd to their work on the FORGOTTEN REALMS, which is one reason why Boyd remains a fan-favorite author for the campaign setting, and one of my favorite magazine contributors. Speaking on online GREYHAWK fans, I first met Eric on a GREYHAWK email list back in the mid-1990s, when he helped me fill in some FORGOTTEN REALMS holes in a research project related to the demons of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Several years later, the two of us co-wrote FORGOTTEN REALMS: Faiths & Pantheons *for Wizards of the Coast, and it was a nice way to bring things full circle.*

Speaking of demons, I've just finished co-writing a new demon book for Wizards with our very own James Jacobs and the able Ed Stark, and in the process referred back to those notes Eric helped me with so long ago. The lesson, here? Never throw anything away, and look for Fiendish Codex 1: Hordes of the Abyss, *available this summer wherever you buy D&D books!*

Manzorian's Secret

Tell me, is "Manzorian" known for his greed to recover every copper found?

Michael Rooney
Via Email

P.S.: Joachim Barrum's moody art is outstanding. Pay him what it takes to keep him around.

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. Manzorian, the archmage we introduced in "The Spire of Long Shadows" (DUNGEON #130) can be any appropriate wizard from any campaign setting, including those of your own design. In my own campaign he is Tenser, the famous blue archmage of GREYHAWK, but we specifically named him something else so that DMs could use him in whatever manner best suits their own campaign without feeling beholden to decades-out-of-print booklets and adventure modules.

In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, for example, he is Malchor Harpell, with Magepoint being the town of Longsaddle. In EBERRON, Manzorian is Manzorian and Magepoint is Magepoint, but instead of on the shores of the Lake of Unknown Depths it's positioned on the southern coast of Breland, just west of Zilspar. These and other conversion suggestions are available in each issue's Online Supplement, available free of charge in the Resources section of paizo.com/dungeon.

As for Joachim, we've got him (and Steve Prescott and Eva Widermann) through the end of the Age of Worms, and have been thrilled with the images they've provided so far. Keeping a consistent look for the art in all of the adventures is a major lesson we learned from working on the Shackled City Adventure Path two years ago.

Girls Love Dungeons!

First of all, I would like to say that I like the direction DUNGEON is headed at the moment. I write because I was intrigued by the discussion of the lack of female D&D players. I agree with Lance Larkin (from issue #129's Letters) that this is a pity, and that more female players would be absolutely welcome. I am a female DM and have played D&D for 23 years now; I've been a DM since 1987. All in all I have had about five or six female players in all these years. At the moment I am running three campaigns. One is an all-male group. The other two each have one female player.

However, I do not agree with the reason Lance Larkin gives for the lack of female players. I do not think you should look at the types of adventures and stereotyping as the cause for the lack of woman players. To begin with, women have different tastes and different playing styles, just like men. It is not true that all women focus on storytelling and problem-solving instead of swordfighting. Some women prefer problem-solving campaigns, but some men do as well. My two female players both love a good fight (and so do I). One of them likes fights with a lot of tumbling, jumping, sneak attacks, and similar maneuvers, while the other just likes a fight against lots of undead (she is my daughter and still very young). During my last session I got my players involved in a city siege and we enjoyed it very much. I also have a male player who writes down everything my NPCs say and remembers plotlines and characters I introduced years ago.

I think women are deterred from the game by the playing style of the group rather than the adventures themselves. In any campaign, you have to take into account the playing styles and preferences of all players, both men and women, and adapt the campaign accordingly. There is nothing wrong with dungeon crawls. After all, any good DM can come up with his (or her) own interesting plot. I use a lot of adventures with dungeon crawls, but almost always rewrite the plot. Usually my version is more complex than the published version, since I add plotlines and intrigue. The advantage is that these are my own. I use DUNGEON for the same reason as a lot of other (male and female) DMs: to save time that would otherwise be lost to drawing maps, rolling stats for monsters and NPCs, etc. So please, people at DUNGEON, do not stuff adventures full of plot lines only because they might appeal to women. We overworked DMs need interesting locations and adversaries, not plots and stories. Adventures with complex plotlines and plot twists are usually very specific, and I have to twist my campaign world a lot to fit them in. For example, I cannot use the Age of Worms because of the incorporation of the *Rod of Seven Parts*. This item plays a very prominent role in my campaign and lies at the heart of one of the most important cities in my campaign world, where it forms the basis of the political structure of a country—not a minor detail that can easily be changed.

But I can always fit in a good self-contained dungeon crawl. The most memorable adventures I have DMed have been dungeon crawls. And yes, I include my own storylines, and usually some strong female characters as well (even though I have an all-male player group). As long

NEXT MONTH IN DUNGEON

CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT

BY NICOLAS LOGUE

The brilliant (if somewhat eccentric) detective Viktor Saint-Demain has put more criminal masterminds behind bars than any three other inquisitives. But when the master sleuth fails to get the recogintion he deserves, he sets out to prove to Sharn that they can't live without him. A EBERRON adventure for 5th-level characters.

ILL-MADE GRAVES

BY KEVIN CARTER

The mighty dragon Oroshar lies dead, as does the barbarian king who slew him. Yet the dragon's spirit does not rest quietly. His wrath lingers in one of the teeth lodged in the dead king's corpse, awaiting only the caress of the funeral pyre before it can awaken into something far worse than a dragon of flesh and bone. A D&D adventure for 7th-level characters.

KINGS OF THE RIFT

BY GREG A. VAUGHAN

Dragotha's phylactery lies hidden somewhere in the ruined city of Kongen-Thulnir, a ruin now inhabited by tribes of giants and in the throes of a draconic siege. Can the PCs discover the secret vault that hides the phylactery before Dragotha's dragons tear the city apart to reach it? An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 18th-level characters.

as my players like it (and they do, since some of them have been coming back for more for nearly 18 years), and as long as I have fun, it works for me.

Carry Oomis
The Netherlands

What a great letter! I agree with just about everything you've said, except for the contention that the Rod of Seven Parts *references in the Age of Worms makes the series impossible to use given the fact that the artifact already plays a role in your campaign. Is the rod at the heart of one of your cities fully intact? By the time the Adventure Path comes to a close, the PCs will have only two fragments in their possession—perhaps the known version in the city is only a partially assembled rod, or perhaps it's a single fragment that can be brought into play after the main thrust of the Age of Worms is over and your players start looking for more epic challenges.*

On the other hand, it should be pretty easy to make the Rod of Seven Parts *(as seen in the Age of Worms) another multi-part artifact from the era of the Wind Dukes of Aaqa or any ancient era in general. Frankly, the multi-part aspect isn't even that necessary, so you can sub in just about anything for the rod and still get good use out of the adventures. In fact, many Age of Worms installments were created to be easily adaptable to one-shot play for people unwilling or unable to play the entire campaign, so I really urge you to give the adventures another look. I think they're some of the best scenarios we've published in the last several years.*

'Tis the Season...

I was just curious about the start date for the Age of Worms (what day, what month?) in Greyhawk. I know that it's CY 595, but I had my players ask me what season it was...

Timothy J. Fezatte
Via Email

For simplicity sake, assume the campaign starts in the seventh month of the year (corresponding to the July issue in which "The Whispering Cairn" debuted). According to my notes, that makes it the high summer month of Reaping.

Meatgrinder 3.5

It achieved infamy back in 1st edition. It was resurrected bigger than before in 2nd edition. What would the chances be of getting the *Tomb of Horrors* revised for 3.5 in a future issue? Even just a straight port-over (without the 2nd edition wrap-around story) would be great. It'd be a crime if the current generation of players didn't get a chance to "experience" this classic meat grinder for themselves...

Coyote Halbert
Via Email

Oh, but they can, thanks to the fine folks over at Wizards of the Coast. Point your web browser to wizards.com/dnd to check out 3.5-compatible updates of two classic adventures: The Tomb of Horrors *(posted, appropriately enough, on 10/31/05) and* White Plume Mountain *(posted on 12/07/05). Rumor has it that expanded versions of other classic adventures will soon be revisited in print from Wizards of the Coast. Watch this space and* DRAGON*'s First Watch column in the coming months for more details about this exciting development!—Erik Mona*

WINGCLIPPER'S REVENGE

BY CHRISTOPHER WISSEL
BY STEVE ELLIS
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI
ANY SETTING | LOW-LEVEL (1ST–5TH) | TEMPERATE FOREST AND SW...

The woodland surrounding the hamlet of Turvin is becoming a dangerous place. Strange lights and sounds come from deep in the forest, and now people from the hamlet are starting to disappear. Some evil force is turning nature against mankind, and it's up to the PCs to put a stop to it.

"Wingclipper's Revenge" is a D&D adventure suitable for four 4th-level characters, scaleable for levels 2–6. It easily fits into a wilderness location in any campaign setting.

Adventure Background

Banba, a wily satyr of the Gossamer Court, has gained considerable influence over the past few years, and now serves as the court's emissary to mortals. Despite his responsibilities, his secret love is the wild parties of the bacchanal. Recently, he has been using his position to lure mortals into these intense, life-changing revels.

After a significant number of mortals suffered tragic accidents stemming from their involvement in the bacchanal, the court ordered Banba to stop inviting them to his parties. But Banba, undaunted by the command of his superiors, simply moved his parties to less obvious premises, concealing them and any affected mortals from his conservative brethren.

One of Banba's recent victims was young Medley Starkson. Tempted by the satyr's pipes, she cavorted passionately with him during the revel, but strayed too close to the edge of a ravine and fell to her death. As she dropped, she grabbed Banba and managed to break off one of his horns. Banba quickly gathered his followers and fled, hoping the whole thing would blow over.

Unfortunately for Banba (and the rest of the Gossamer Court), any hopes that the event would pass without notice were dashed when Medley's brother, Agrio Starkson, arrived on the scene. The Starksons have always been capable woodsmen, but Agrio was a paragon. When he found Medley's body, the satyr's horn still clutched in her hand, he swore to track down and kill every fey in the Dhamoril Woods.

Gathering a retinue of cruel followers, he dubbed himself "Wingclipper." Hunting sprites with specially designed equipment, he began stringing up their corpses near his encampment in the swamps, eliciting fear and terror in the Gossamer Court.

Unable to stop him, the fey have begun a slow migration south, crossing the Indigo River and coming very close to the mortal hamlet of Turvin, where the

PCs hear of strange and dangerous creatures lurking in the northern woods.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs arrive at the hamlet of Turvin, where they learn that fey in the north woods are harassing the peaceful townsfolk. Their investigation leads them into the forest iteslf.

Before they get far, a strike team from the Gossamer Court attacks the PCs. This encounter leads them to the court emissary, the duplicitous satyr Banba. He tells them that the migration south is due to a ranger bent on the destruction of all fey. His removal would give the fey the freedom to return to the northern forests.

The PCs must make the dangerous journey to the swamps surrounding Nightshade Hold. There, the PCs deal with Wingclipper's minions before confronting the ranger himself. When the PCs learn the true story behind Wingclipper's attacks and the death of Medley Starkson, Banba arrives on the scene with his followers to kill the PCs and keep his dark secret.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure begins when the PCs arrive in the hamlet of Turvin to investigate the mysterious activity in the Dahmoril Woods, the forest north of town. Here are a few ways to get the PCs to Turvin:

- Famous for its masterful woodcrafts, Turvin has been an important resource for merchant houses looking to distribute these goods. Lately, the quality of the craftsmanship has declined, causing many distributors to look elsewhere. **Errin Maltaas** (N male human aristocrat 1/expert 1), a merchant friendly with Turvin's mayor Barnabas Revland, understands that the town is on the road to ruin. He approaches the PCs and asks them to travel to Turvin and speak with the mayor directly.
- Unemployed and broken, **Tobias Avern** (CN male human expert 2) was once a prominent woodcarver in Turvin. Now, he is an unshaven drunk, hanging out in bars where he begs for drinks. He tells fantastic stories

about ghosts and monsters in the north woods, describing the slavering fangs and horrible, alien eyes that caused him to flee the town, leaving his wife and children behind. Just mentioning this fact causes him to break down into shame-faced crying and beg the PCs to travel to Turvin to check up on them.

- A local temple of Pelor reports that a large shipment of cold iron was recently delivered to a strange halfling with gray skin. During the negotiation, he flashed a symbol of Nerull to intimidate the merchant into a better price. He left with a larger humanoid with flame tattoos on his wrists and arms. They headed north toward Turvin, pulling a full handcart. The temple wishes the PCs to investigate Turvin and find out what the Nerull worshiper is doing there.

Chapter One: Dark Wilderness

The hamlet of Turvin is located near the edge of a large wooded area known as the Dhamoril Woods. The locals are mostly craftsman and carvers who use the woodland's trees as raw materials for their crafts.

Buildings in Turvin are composed primarily of wood and thatch. The whitewashed temple of St. Cuthbert, the hamlet's only brick structure, stands in stark contrast to the rest of the hamlet. There is no gate, but the temple contains a small store of simple weapons and provisions for emergencies.

Turvin (hamlet): Conventional; AL NG; Population 625; 200 gp limit; Assets 14,597 gp; Isolated (94% human, 3% dwarven, 2% halfling, 1% other).

Authority figures: **Mayor Barnabas Revland** (LN male human ranger 1/expert 1); **Aknar Bonespur** (LG male dwarf cleric 1); **Marius Reddlehare** (N male human expert 2).

The people of Turvin are hardy and strong, their hands thick and wrinkled from years of woodworking. But despite their robust appearance, dark circles hover under their eyes. Even the children seem too worn-out to play. If the PCs make a DC 10 Gather Information check in town, they learn one or more of the following rumors:

- A local woodsman named Marshal Ternsval was out foraging for firewood last evening, and he has not come back. His wife is worried, but the initial forays into the woods have turned up nothing.
- The children speak of playing with a bunch of pretty butterflies that glowed different colors, enticing them further into the woods. One of the older boys got scared and pulled the rest of the children back into town.
- No one sleeps well these days, and the hamlet's craft is beginning to suffer. Two city merchants have already withdrawn their contracts, damaging the hamlet's economy. The mayor is desperately writing letters to nearby guilds promising that things will improve.
- Two travelers, a human and a halfling, stayed at the inn last night. They wore dark cloaks and slept in shifts in the common room. When morning came, they followed a deer trail into the woods, pulling a heavy handcart behind them. They kept to themselves, and paid double to be left alone.

Dhamoril Woods Encounters

d%	Encounter	Average EL	Source
01–07	1d3 owlbears	6	*Monster Manual* 206
08–15	1 tendriculos	6	*Monster Manual* 241
16–25	1d3 centaurs	5	*Monster Manual* 32
26–32	2 dire wolves	5	*Monster Manual* 65
33–36	1 young green dragon	5	*Monster Manual* 74
37–43	2 black bears	4	*Monster Manual* 269
44–49	1 dire boar	4	*Monster Manual* 63
50–57	2d4 Small monstrous spiders	4	*Monster Manual* 288
58–65	1 assassin vine	3	*Monster Manual* 20
66–73	1 giant wasp	3	*Monster Manual* 285
74–79	1 unicorn	3	*Monster Manual* 249
83–90	1 dire badger	2	*Monster Manual* 62
91–00	1 Large monstrous spider	2	*Monster Manual* 289

The Blue Oak Inn

There are no trade routes leading through Turvin, so the Blue Oak Inn is empty of overnighters. Its primary patrons are locals who spend many evenings in the common room, and an occasional merchant in town to buy the local crafts. There are two rooms available for visitors. Both are kept in good order by the barkeep, a thin, needle-nosed man named Marius Reddlehare. In each room, wood-carved knickknacks and beautiful handcrafted furniture show off the local industry.

If the PCs stay the night they are repeatedly awakened by strange sounds coming from the nearby woods.

The Temple of St. Cuthbert

This small, three-room brick temple serves as the hamlet's religious center. An old, gnarled cleric, Aknar Bonespur, runs the place. He spends most of his time on the front porch carving wood. The rustic, backwater cleric has a few potions and scrolls in his storeroom for the PCs to purchase.

The Stables

The mayor himself stables the town's six horses, and the rooms attached to the stables serve as his home and office. He is very friendly, and spends most of his time supervising contracts or splitting and carving wood in the yard behind his dwelling.

The mayor is pleased to welcome the PCs, and asks them to investigate what is happening in the nearby forest. He fears that the hamlet is in danger, and insists the PCs find a way to stop the lights and noises coming from the woods before the locals are forced to

leave. If the PCs demand payment, he offers them 2,000 gp from the hamlet treasury (a sum that encompasses most of their savings) as a reward.

The Woods

When the PCs arrive in town, the woods are quiet. Only a single deer trail extends into the deeper woods. Between dusk and dawn, glowing lights and strange sounds emerge from the depths.

Exploring the Dahmoril Woods

The woods are light at the edge, as the citizens of Turvin have logged many of the trees. But as the PCs travel further inward, the trees become thick, mossy, and ancient. Light filters through the canopy only sporadically, just a few slivers of sunlight finding their way to the forest floor.

The tracks of the mysterious figures with the hand-cart follow a deer trail through the woods. It takes a DC 10 Survival check to follow the trail successfully. Staying with the trail itself is easy, and it takes the characters all the way to area **3**.

Camping in the Dhamoril Woods is problematic. The raucous fey make strange noises and lights throughout the journey. Every night the PCs camp in the woods they must make a DC 10 Fortitude save to avoid being fatigued the next day.

The forest holds many possible encounters, as it teems with life. Use the encounter table provided, and refer to page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information on forest terrain.

1. The Bramble Cart (EL 4)

The trail ends abruptly, and an uncovered cart can be seen up ahead. It is overgrown with thorny brambles, with strange vines growing out of the wooden frame. A remarkably large thorn bush grows at the foot of the cart, a pile of torn clothing wrapped around its base and hanging from its lower branches.

The cart is 2 feet by 5 feet, and is surrounded by an additional 10-foot radius of heavy undergrowth.

Creatures: Two sinister fey known as splinterwaifs lurk inside the cart. They intercepted Wingclipper's supply of cold iron, and are gleefully tuning the corpses of the halfling and human into thorny bushes for later consumption.

Splinterwaifs (2) **CR 2**

NE Medium fey

Monster Manual III 164

Init +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Spot +4, Listen +4

Languages Sylvan

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 12

hp 12 (2 HD) **DR** 5/silver

SR 7

Fort +1, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

Spd 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

Melee 2 claws +6 (1d4)

Ranged splinterspit +6 (1d6)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Atk Option sneak attack +2d6

Special Atk call brambles, transformation

Abilities Str 11, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ camouflage, superior woodland stride

Feats Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +12, Bluff +8, Climb +10, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +8, Hide +10, Intimidate +5, Jump +10, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +10, Search +7, Sense Motive +5, Spot +4, Survival +5, Tumble +10

Call Brambles (Su) As a standard action, a splinterwaif can cause a thorny branch to grow out of any nonmagical wooden surface within 30 feet. Treat this branch as a Medium animated object with a speed of 0 feet and the constrict special attack. Controlling an animated bramble is a free action. A splinterwaif can only create one bramble at a time.

Camouflage (Su) This full-round action changes the splinterwaif's skin coloration, giving it a +10 bonus on Hide checks, as well as concealment. Attacking or moving negates this effect.

Splinterspit (Su) A splinterwaif can spit a splinter of wood at a foe as a ranged attack with a range increment of 30 feet.

Superior Woodland Stride (Su) A splinterwaif can move though natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain at its normal speed without taking damage or suffering other impairment. This includes thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that are magically manipulated to impede motion (such as with the *entangle* spell).

Transformation (Su) A splinterwaif can transform a dead humanoid or fey into a Medium thorny bush at will. Doing this reqires a full minute of concentration; if the splinterwaif is interrupted during this time, it must start the transformation process over again. A transformed body does not radiate magic and is treated as a normal plant. A creature that has been transformed may not be brought back to life by any means short of *true resurrection*, *miracle*, or *wish*.

Tactics: If they hear the approaching PCs, the splinterwaifs prepare an ambush, launching splinterspit at the adventurers. If the PCs close on them through the underbrush, they call brambles to flank the party so they can use sneak attack.

Treasure: Inside the cart is the body of one of Wingclipper's followers, a gray halfling. The corpse is bloody and covered with lacerations. A DC 15 Search in the surrounding area reveals a cold iron holy symbol of Nerull.

In addition, a total of 62 gp and 112 sp lies strewn in the ruined cart, as well as mundane supplies for a long journey. These supplies include 50 feet of silk rope, masterwork fletching materials (75 gp), and 100 days worth of rations. Beneath the supplies at the bottom of the cart is a chest filled with 100 lbs. of raw cold iron worth 500 gp.

Development: The travelers were cutting their way due northeast to deliver supplies to Wingclipper and his minions. Their plan was to retrieve a raft in area 4 and take it downriver to the swamps. This overgrown path has been used before, and can be followed with a DC 18 Survival check. The check must be made once per mile or the trail is lost completely.

2. Hangover Clearing

The deer trail opens into a forty-foot-diameter clearing. Empty wineskins and rotten, half-eaten fruit litter the area. The air is sour with the stink of spilled wine. A large, twisted tree stands in the center of the clearing, tatters of festive ribbon and dimly glowing beehives clinging to it.

Creatures: Nestled against the trunk is the sprawled form of poor Marshal Ternsval, the village woodcutter. He is stark naked, his feet and legs caked with dirt and moss. He remembers nothing specific, but seems to think that he was involved in a wild party. He reports a painful headache, as well as a few fingernail scratches on his torso. A DC 10 Search of the clearing unearths his clothes, hidden under a rock. After he gets dressed, he is distressed to find that his wedding ring is missing.

Development: The trail left by the unseen revelers extends to the northwest. A DC 15 Survival check reveals numerous humanoid tracks, as well as cloven hoof prints, along the trail. These belong to Banba and his summoned bacchanal. The trail is too indistinct to determine how many there were, but it is clear they were here the previous evening. The tracks follow the deer trail north, then veer off to the northwest, vanishing completely a hundred yards away. The deer trail continues north to area 3.

3. The Misty Bridge (EL 4)

The trail ends abruptly, revealing an opening in the trees. A fast-moving river flows from the west, and a scattering of ancient willow trees and cattails line both banks. Small rocks cause the water to gurgle and sputter with froth, spraying the air with a fine mist. A fifteen-foot-wide, horizontal bridge of sturdy, gossamer webbing hangs from two willow trees, one on each bank. The web sparkles with incandescent dew five feet above the water, and as the light hits it, the entire expanse shimmers with multicolored hues.

The webbing is thick and reinforced with multiple layers, providing a weight allowance of 300 pounds per five-foot square. The total weight allowance is 750 pounds. Anything over that amount causes the webbing to break, spilling everyone into the water. A DC 20 Swim check is required to fight the current. Otherwise, the PC is swept away at 60 feet per round until he reaches area 4.

Creatures: The maker of the bridge is Remi, an unseelie fey ettercap. He is bright purple with yellow stripes, and two gossamer wings fan either side of his chubby frame. His multi-faceted, hypnotic eyes stare impassively as his head constantly cocks itself from side to side.

Until recently, the river served as the southern border of the fey lands, but Wingclipper's assault pushed the fey

further south, forcing them to create a bridge. Remi serves as both a guard and a transport across the rushing river. He is easily cowed by illusions, and most fey who use him have no trouble controlling his primitive nature.

Remi CR 4
Summer unseelie fey ettercap
CE Medium fey
Dragon Compendium 222, *Monster Manual* 106
Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Spot +8, Listen +4
Languages Common, Sylvan

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11
hp 22 (5 HD) **DR** 5/cold iron
Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average)
Melee bite +7 (1d8+1 plus poison) and 2 claws +5 (1d3)
Ranged web +7
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Abilities Str 12, Dex 19, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 10
SQ iron vulnerability, summer caress
Feats Multiattack, Weapon Finesse
Skills Climb +9, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Hide +10, Intimidate +4, Listen +4, Spot +8

Summer Caress (Su) Remi is warded at all times with a *magic circle of nature*. This effect is equivalent to a *magic circle against evil*, except that it protects against attacks made by all creatures except for those of the animal, fey, magical beast, and plant types, regardless of alignment.
Iron Vulnerability (Ex) A hit with an iron or steel weapon deals an additional 1d6 points of damage to Remi. His DR protects him from this damage, unless it originates from a source that normally bypasses his DR (such as a cold iron weapon).
Web (Ex) The DCs for the Escape Artist and Strength checks to break out of Remi's webs are 12 and 16, respectively.
Poison (Ex) The Fortitude save DC for Remi's poison is 14.

Tactics: Remi waits in the willow 10 feet up, gaining cover. He starts combat by throwing a few gossamer webs at the party, then flies from his hiding spot to the center of the web.

Treasure: Remi throws everything he finds into the river except shiny objects. His victims are mostly animals, but he also caught a deep halfling and kept his gem pouch. Inside the pouch are five obsidian gems (25 gp each), three bloodstones (50 gp each), two tourmalines (150 gp each), three garnets (175 gp each), and a black pearl (250 gp).

4. The Launch (EL 4)

The forest clears here, revealing a wide lake fed by a river flowing in from the west. In the middle of the water sits a small, overgrown island. A broken bundle of logs floats in the water, shreds of rope keeping the fragile construction from spilling into the outlet on the northern side.

The lake is shallow, little more than 10 feet deep at its deepest spot, making it easy to wade out to the island. The island contains the scattered remains of a campsite, where a DC 12 Search check reveals humanoid waste and the various bones of local fauna.

Creatures: Wading out to the island provokes an attack from the three hostile nixies in the area. They have successfully charmed a lost bugbear named Nossfur, temporarily granting him *water breathing*. The nixies have playfully decorated him with bright, outlandish colors, and he wears a number of earrings, necklaces, and other baubles handmade by the trio. He considers himself the leader and patron of the three giggling female nixies.

Nossfear, bugbear: hp 18; *Monster Manual* 29.

Nixies (3): hp 3 each; *Monster Manual* 235.

Tactics: Nossfur and the nixies lurk under the water. After the PCs inspect the island, Nossfur swims up to attack. He engages the PCs to allow the nixies time to surface and attack from behind. If one of the nixies is killed, the other two flee upstream, leaving Nossfur to his fate.

Treasure: Nossfur has nothing but useless trinkets, but the nixies have collected a number of items in the waters near the outlet, including 200 gp in loose coins, an ivory bracelet worth 125 gp, and a waterlogged *cloak of resistance* +1.

Development: If the PCs attempt to reassemble the raft or make a new one, they can use it to float downstream to the swamps in area **8**. At some point during their river journey, they are attacked by pixies from the Gossamer Court.

Event 1: Pixie Ambush (EL 7)

After the PCs cross the river, they are in the heart of fey country. Read the following description as soon as they lose sight of the north bank of the river.

The forest thickens considerably. The sounds of the river fade away, as does the natural chirping of forest creatures. The canopy completely obscures the sky, leaving only a gloomy half-light. No plant life grows on the forest floor, except for small patches of colorful mushrooms and toadstools.

Treat the dense woodland of fey country as shadowy illumination.

No matter what path the PCs take through the northern woods, once the river is crossed (or if the PCs attempt to follow it downstream) the Gossamer Court sends out a team of pixies to capture and subdue the party. The fey are ordered to bring them for questioning, without killing them if possible.

Pixies (3): hp 3 each; *Monster Manual* 236

Tactics: Two of the pixies remain invisible, using their *entangle* abilities and *sleep arrows* to subdue the party. The third uses *permanent image* to create a horrid, blood-soaked troll that howls with rage, using it to draw combatants away from the attacking fey. None of the pixies can cast *Otto's irresistible dance*.

Development: If two of the pixies fall, the last one flees back to Banba to report his failure. Whether it escapes or not, the PCs can trace the pixies back to their master by following the trail of pixie dust that stains the trees. The dust glows brightly for a full 24 hours before it fades away. The trail leads directly to area **5**.

If a pixie is captured, his initial attitude is hostile, but if he can be brought around to indifferent he agrees to guide the party to his master in area **5**. He doesn't know much about the current situation or the reason for the attacks and other disturbances, and he advises the PCs to ask his master.

If the PCs are successfully subdued, they are dragged to area 5, where they are unceremoniously dumped into the shallow pond. They awaken sputtering, soaking wet, and bound (DC 28 Escape Artist check).

Banba will not allow the PCs to pass through the forest without meeting with them. If the PCs ignore the trail, he continues to send groups of pixies to bring them in. If the PCs defeat three such groups, he reluctantly goes himself to meet the PCs on their terms.

5. The Fens of Gelgarie (EL 8)

A large pond occupies the center of this clearing. Lilly pads ten feet in diameter drift on the quiet water, and ferns and other flowing plants rustle in the breeze. Puffs of dandelion seeds and other pollens permeate the air. Large filaments of silken thread are attached to some of the lilly pads, forming a rough bridge that leads to a small island in the center of the pond. Rising from the summit of a small hill in the center of the lake grows a massive plant, its leaves arching more than fifty feet above the pool. A single stalk grows from the center of the enormous plant, rising over a hundred feet into the sky to unfurl a huge white flower. A faint red light softly emanates from the center of the plant, revealing hundreds of tiny fey that flutter around it.

It takes a DC 8 Balance check to traverse the bridge without falling into the water.

Creatures: Small swarms of sprites prance about the lily pads, casting pale multicolored light. They do not attack, but a few get close to the PCs, where they shout obscenities and display rude gestures. Any character that falls into the water receives reprimands from the nixies that live there.

Nixies (12): hp 3 each; *Monster Manual* 235.

6. The Emissary Stone

A tangle of intertwined vines creates a firm, nearly smooth surface surrounding the base of the stalk in the center of the plant. Standing next to the stalk is a large, oval stone, as tall as a dwarf, covered with vines and moss. The light from above casts a pale red glow on the entire area.

Creatures: Standing on the platform is a grinning satyr. He smells of goats and offal and sips honeywine from a large leaf. One of his horns has been carved with mirthful decorations while the other has been broken off completely. Lurking in the shadow cast from the stone is a slim, gray-skinned humanoid, his face covered with a number of tattoos and piercings. He is dressed in severe robes made of stiff, angular material.

BANBA **CR 6**

Male satyr bard 4
CN Medium fey
Monster Manual 219
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Spot +14, Listen +14
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Dodge, Mobility
hp 60 (9 HD) **DR** 5/cold iron
Fort +4, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8

Spd 40 ft.
Melee mwk rapier +9 (1d6+1/18–20) and head butt +3 (1d6)
Ranged mwk shortbow +9 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6
Atk Option Spring Attack
Special Atk countersong, inspire competence, inspire courage +1, *fascinate*, pipes
Combat Gear *pipes of sounding*, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2)
Bard Spells Known (CL 4, +8 ranged touch)
2nd (1/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 16), *glitterdust* (DC 16)
1st (3/day)—*cure light wounds*, *grease* (DC 15), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 15)
0 (3/day)—*daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 18
SQ bardic knowledge
Feats Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +8, Bluff +16, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +7, Hide +19, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +14, Move Silently, +19, Perform (wind instruments) +12, Spot +14, Tumble +7
Possessions combat gear, *bracers of armor +1*, *ring of protection +1*, masterwork rapier, masterwork shortbow with 30 arrows, 3 *elixirs of love*, *illusory map*

Pipes (Su) The DC for Banba's pipes ability is 16.

IVICERUS **CR 7**

Male shadar-kai wizard 6
NE Medium fey
Fiend Folio 150
Init +9; **Senses** superior low-light vision; Spot +7, Listen +7
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 12
hp 28 (39 with *false life*) (9 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +11, (+2 vs. death effects and energy drain)

Spd 30 ft.
Melee dagger +4 (1d4/19–20)

New Magic Item: Illusory Map

An *illusory map* is a representation of an outdoor area encompassing no more than 100 square miles. When unrolled, the illusion on the scroll activates, providing a 3-dimensional view of the landscape. The map gives a +10 bonus on Survival checks to negotiate the displayed terrain. Once it is created, the map cannot be altered to reflect environmental changes.

Moderate illusion; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, 5 ranks in Craft (cartography), *hallucinatory terrain*; Price 1,250 gp; Weight .5 lbs.

New Magic Item: Gal-Ralan

These cold iron armbands were created by the shadar-kai to help them ward off the shadow curse. They provide a resistance bonus to all saving throws, and provide an additional +2 bonus versus death and energy drain effects, including the shadow curse. However, any creature that wears one suffers 1 point of Constitution damage that may not be healed as long as the *gal-ralan* is worn.

Moderate Necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *resistance*, caster level must be at least three times that of the *gal-ralan's* bonus; Price: 2,500; Weight: —.

Ranged dagger +8 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4
Atk Option sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear scroll of *expeditious retreat*, scroll of *darkness*, scroll of *invisibility*, scroll of *minor image*, scroll of *sleep*, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (4)
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 6, +9 ranged touch)
3rd—*dispel magic*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 18)
2nd—*false life**, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*
1st—*mage armor**, *magic missile* (2), *ray of enfeeblement*
0—*acid splash*, *daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *read magic*
*already cast

Abilities Str 10, Dex 20, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 6
SQ hide in plain sight, shadow curse, summon familiar (rat)
Feats Alertness, Brew Potion, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (enchantment), Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse
Skills Concentration +13, Hide +11, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +7, Move Silently +11, Search +10, Spellcraft +16, Spot +7, Survival +7
Possessions combat gear, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *ring of protection +1*, dagger, *headband of intellect +2*, *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), *+2 gal-ralan*
Spellbook as above plus 0—all; 1st—*alarm*, *burning hands*, *cause fear*, *charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*, *silent image*, *sleep*; 2nd—*darkness*, *detect thoughts*, *hypnotic pattern*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *spider climb*; 3rd—*deep slumber*, *displacement*, *gaseous form*

Hide in Plain Sight (Su) As long as he is not illuminated by natural daylight, the *daylight* spell, or a similar magical light, Ivicerus can use the Hide skill even while being observed in the open.

Shadow Curse (Su) Any time Ivicerus is stunned, dazed, staggered, or unconscious (other than natural sleep), he must make a DC 15 Will save or gain one negative level permanently. Ivicerus must also

make a save if he ever takes off his *galralan*. This is an energy drain effect.

Superior Low-Light Vision (Ex) Ivicerus can see four times as far as a human in low-light conditions.

Development: Depending on the situation, this encounter might be anything from a hostile attack to a prisoner interrogation to a hostage negotiation. No matter what the circumstances, when Banba addresses the PCs, he projects nothing but goodwill and hospitality. He apologizes for the fey that have attacked them, but points out that it was the PCs who invaded their territory first. He introduces his fellow emissary, the shadar-kai Ivicerus.

Ever the opportunist, Banba has decided to use the PCs to solve the Gossamer Court's biggest problem and advance his own position at the same time. He knows that the best way to deal with Wingclipper is to have non-fey kill him. Then, after the battle, he can sneak into Wingclipper's lair and retrieve his incriminating horn.

During the meeting, Banba tells the PCs that an evil ranger named Wingclipper has been hunting fey to the north, and has killed a startling number over the last few months. Banba does not reveal the truth about Medley, only that the ranger seems to hate fey indiscriminately.

Wingclipper's presence is the reason why the fey have been moving steadily south. If the fey were rid of the evil ranger, they could safely return to the northern forest, leaving the village of Turvin alone.

Banba himself is desperate to return to the old ways before the initial incident, and does his best to convince the party to help, telling them what he thinks they want to hear, including the offer of a reward from the Gossamer Court.

If the PCs inquire about the bacchanal remnants in area 2, Banba immediately confesses that he was responsible for summoning the otherworldly revel. His quick confession and appeal to his satyr's nature are subtle ploys meant to gain the party's trust.

If the PCs ask about Ternsval's wedding ring, Banba looks surprised. He rummages through his bags, and eventually finds it stuck to some rotten grapes. He wipes it off and freely offers it to the party with further apologies.

Ivicerus never speaks unless spoken to, and even then only in short, clipped sentences. He reveals nothing about his homeland, except that it is under the earth. He nods thoughtfully at decisions made during the meeting. He is primarily there to keep an eye on Banba for the rest of the Gossamer Court, who don't completely trust the satyr. Nevertheless, he does his best to defend the satyr if the PCs attack the pair.

If the PCs agree, the emissaries offer a gift to aid them on their way. Ivicerus hands over 4 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, and Banba offers an *illusory map*, which details the northern forest as well as the swamps around Wingclipper's lair.

Reaching the lair without the map is difficult, as there are no trails, and the PCs will not have safe passage from even the neutral and good-aligned fey. Banba also mentions that Ivicerus has been making deals with the evil fey that inhabit the northern areas, hoping that Wingclipper might be killed by

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creatures more malicious than himself. They patrol the northern lands, and are very dangerous.

Banba is a masterful negotiator and liar, and should be played as if he is completly sincere. If possible, he attempts to cast suspicion on Ivicerus.

7. Fell Glade (EL 5)

The land starts to creep downhill, and there are breaks in the trees, allowing sunlight to filter through. Suddenly, the dense forest gives way, revealing a wide glade running down the hillside. A thick mist hangs over a vast stretch of lowland to the northeast. Two huge fir trees dominate the center of the clearing, with countless mushrooms growing in their shade.

Creatures: A dryad lives in each of the two fir trees in the center of this clearing. They live in constant fear that Wingclipper will discover their retreat and destroy them by cutting down their trees. Such is the state of their paranoia that they attack any non-fey creature that enters their clearing, regardless of the circumstances.

Dryads (2): hp 14 each; *Monster Manual* 90.

Treasure: The mushrooms growing beneath the dryads' trees have been infused with part of their magic. A successful DC 13 Knowledge (nature) or DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals 6 doses of striped-toadstool poison, as well as edible magic mushrooms that are equivalent to three *potions of enlarge person*, and two *potions of reduce person*.

8. Entrance to Wingclipper's Domain

The thinning forest gives way to a blasted region of swampland. This area may have once been a very mossy, wetland glen, full of sprites and darting creatures. Now, greasy smoke hangs over everything, and the once-prevalent trees have been hacked down.

A large post made of rotting wood stands forlornly against the backdrop of the swamps. A dead pixie hangs from the post by its wings, fixed there with a pair of cold iron spikes. Apparently it was nailed alive, as its tiny hands are torn from its attempts to remove itself.

A small sign is attached to the top of the post with the word "Deceiver" written in jagged Sylvan script. Similar grisly displays decorate the perimeter of the swamp every quarter mile in either direction.

Before beginning this section of the adventure, you should be familiar with the rules for marsh terrain, found on page 89 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. In addition to the effects listed there, running is impossible in these swamps, and visibility is reduced to 120 feet.

Event 2: The Patrol (EL 5)

The Hellfire Militia is a platoon of 20 hobgoblins that followed Wingclipper to the swamplands for the thrill of destroying fey. Led by the grizzled, nature-hating hobgoblin Gervarg Murt, they have set about clearing the woodlands in pseudo-military fashion. Every member of the group wields cold iron weapons and sports allegiance tattoos of orange flames on their arms and legs.

For every hour spent inside Wingclipper's territory, there is a cumulative 10% chance of encountering the Hellfire Militia patrol. The patrol leader is always mounted on a specially bred dire toad, and covers every area of the marshlands in 4–6 hours.

The dire toad mount is tattooed with elaborate flames across its head and body, giving it an evil, demonic appearance.

When the toad is bridled and mounted, it cannot use any of its attacks, which accounts for its reduced CR. If the bridle is removed, it attacks anyone within its reach.

Toad Rider CR 2

Hobgoblin fighter 2
LE Medium humanoid (goblin)
Monster Manual 153
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +1, Listen +1
Languages Common, Goblin

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13
hp 19 (2 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Spd 30 ft.
Melee cold iron longsword +4 (1d8+2/19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+2/x3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Atk Option Mounted Archery

Abilities Str 15, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot
Skills Handle Animal +5, Move Silently +6, Ride +10
Possessions masterwork studded leather, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Strength) with 30 cold iron arrows, cold iron longsword

Advanced Dire Toad CR 4

N Large animal
Monster Manual II 74
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Spot +6, Listen +6

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14
hp 55 (7 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Spd 30 ft.
Melee bite +8 (1d6+4 plus poison [1d6 Con/1d6 Con; Fort save DC 17]) or tongue +8 melee (grapple)
Space 10 ft. **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tongue)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +13
Atk Option improved grab
Special Atk swallow whole

Abilities Str 18, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7
Feats Endurance, Improved Natural Armor, Run
Skills Hide +5, Jump +22, Listen +6, Spot +6

Swallow Whole (Ex) A dire toad can swallow a Medium or smaller grabbed opponent by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the toad, the opponent takes 1d6+4 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage each round. The opponent can escape by making a successful grapple check to climb back up into the toad's mouth (still considered grappled) or by using a light piercing or slashing weapon to deal 10 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 14). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole. Another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

"Hellfire Militia" hobgoblin, warrior 1 (2): hp 6 each, *Monster Manual* 153.

Development: Questioning any of the hobgoblins reveals that they are loyal to the Hellfire Militia, as well as to Wingclipper. They can also provide information regarding the layout of the keep if made friendly by a Diplomacy check (their initial attitude is hostile), but the hobgoblins have never seen anything beyond the first floor of Nightshade Hold.

9. The Woodland Pyre (EL 3)

A large flame burns here, sending greasy black smoke into the air. A number of chopped logs surround the massive blaze.

Creatures: The guards stationed here are members of the Hellfire Militia. This particular group has been clearing away the edge of the woods, to further weaken the hold of the fey.

"Hellfire Militia" hobgoblin, warrior 1 (4): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 153.

10. The Barracks (EL 3)

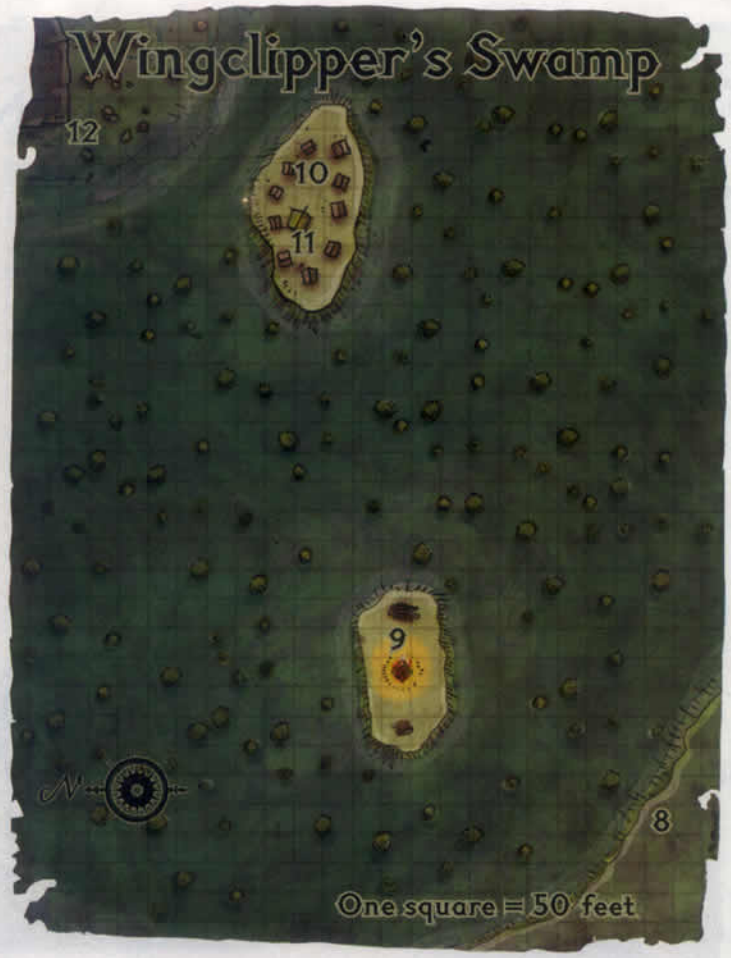
A rough circle of ten small tents, spaced apart at five-foot intervals, surrounds a larger central tent. There are a number of camping utensils strewn about, including bedrolls, backpacks, and other mundane items.

Creatures: Only Grevarg Murt is allowed inside Nightshade Hold, and that is mostly to provide proper care for his dire toad mount. This encampment serves as the main barracks area for the Hellfire Militia. Four guards are stationed here at all times, while four others sleep in the various tents.

Hobgoblin, warrior 1 (8): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 153.

11. The Mustering Tent (EL 4)

This large tent contains most of the militia's possessions, including an iron chest and a number of weapons. One section is cordoned off to serve as a mess hall, with a number of wooden tables stacked to one side. The ground is muddy and strewn with trash.



Creatures: Guards are posted here around the clock, and don't leave the tent under any circumstances. In addition, a toad rider is stationed here at all times to oversee the distribution of resources.

Hobgoblin, warrior 1 (2): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 153

Toad Rider Hobgoblin: hp 19; see page 30.

Advanced Dire Toad: hp 55; see page 30.

Treasure: Weapon racks contain 10 cold iron longswords and 5 suits of studded leather. In addition, a large wooden chest contains the militia's wealth: 1,325 cp, 650 sp, 425 gp, a *lesser ring of swimming*, and three *potions of bull's strength*.

12. The Approach (EL 6)

A ruined keep looms through the smoky haze. The entire east side of the keep has collapsed, and the west side has begun to sink into the muck. The south face of the keep is surrounded by two feet of water on all sides, where moss and debris float in the fetid muck. The top floors of the ruin fell into the swamp long ago, and a series of flat rocky surfaces juts out at intervals from the water's surface.

Creatures: Grevarg Murt has stationed himself here, where he can hear reports and give progress updates to Wingclipper. He defends the entrance, keepingtwo guards with him. He is proud and confident and will not sound an alarm.

Nightshade Hold
22
THIRD LEVEL
20
21
SECOND LEVEL
N
17
FIRST LEVEL
13
14
18
16
T
15
19
One square = 5 feet
Encounter Area 12 The Approach

A gray ooze floats on the water's surface near the entrance, feeding on the daily waste that is thrown from the keep. Since one unsuspecting hobgoblin fell in during a nighttime patrol, the ooze has reacted to the slightest movement on the columns, positioning itself to strike as soon as anything falls into the water.

Grevarg Murt CR 4

Male hobgoblin fighter 2/ranger 2
LE Medium humanoid (goblin)
Monster Manual 153
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +3, Listen +3
Languages Common, Goblin

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 30 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk longsword +7 (1d8+2/19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +9 (1d8+2/x3) or
mwk composite longbow +7/+7 (1d8+2/x3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Option Mounted Archery, Rapid Shot

Abilities Str 15, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14
SQ wild empathy +6
Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)
Skills Handle Animal +9, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Ride +12, Spot +3, Survival +5
Possessions +1 *studded leather*, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Strength) with 50 cold iron arrows, masterwork longsword

Advanced Dire Toad: hp 55; see page 30.

"Hellfire Militia" Hobgoblin, warrior 1 (2): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 153.

Gray Ooze: hp 31; *Monster Manual* 202.

Tactics: Murt uses the terrain and the jumping abilities of his mount to stay mobile and fire ranged attacks. The guards focus on bull rushing foes into the water. If Grevarg Murt falls, the remaining hobgoblins flee east through the swamps, where they are eventually picked off by pixies.

Chapter Two: Nightshade Hold

An ancient lord named Vertri Nightshade built this keep. He wished to control the river trade through the lowlands. The capricious fey allowed him to build the keep, then drove everyone away as soon as it was finished. Furious, Vertri sent in an army to control the area, but they were driven mad with illusions and slew each other in a horrible bloodbath. Their bodies have decayed, but dredging up the swamps would reveal hundreds of bone fragments, picked clean by swamp creatures.

When Wingclipper found the keep, only a few rooms and walls on the west side were still standing, and even they are in horrible disrepair.

13. Flooded Hall (EL 2)

This entrance is partially flooded with water. A short wall of stacked sandbags keeps the fetid tide at bay. Unused torch sconces line the crumbling walls, and the once-painted cracked dome has faded to a dull pinkish color.

Creatures: Wingclipper's animal companion, a submerged crocodile, stands guard here. He attacks anything that moves through the water, including the hobgoblins.

Crocodile: hp 22; *Monster Manual* 271.

Ad-hoc Experience Award: Since this crocodile is Wingclipper's animal companion, do not give the PCs experience for defeating it if they also defeat Wingclipper himself.

14. Stablemaster's Quarters (EL 3)

This filthy room is full of junk, most of it worthless. A dirty straw pallet lies in one corner and a few rickety tables contain various strange collections including molted feathers and piles of dry animal spoor. Each item is labeled in rough, child-like script. A dead hawk stares down from the wall, nailed there through the neck.

Creatures: This room belongs to the stablemaster, Bale Nortson. An outcast, he was taken in by Grevarg Murt for his ability to tame the toad mounts. He is a simple, pathetic creature who spends his time marveling over the animal world.

Wingclipper initially had doubts about his allegiance. He killed Bale's animal companion, a hawk named Pook, and stuffed the body, warning the druid that he would be next if he ever betrayed Wingclipper. Bale mourns his poor hawk, but is fearfully loyal to Wingclipper..

Bale Nortson CR 3

Male hobgoblin druid 3
LE Medium humanoid (goblin)
Monster Manual 153
Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +3, Listen +9
Languages Common, Goblin, Orc

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12
hp 17 (3 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Spd 20 ft.
Melee club +5 (1d6+3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear *gray bag of tricks*, *wand of charm animal* (22 charges)
Druid Spells Prepared (CL 3)
2nd—*bull's strength*, *heat metal* (DC 15)
1st—*calm animals* (DC 14), *magic fang*, *speak with animals*
0—*create water*, *flare* (DC 13), *know direction*, *purify food and drink*

Abilities Str 17, Dex 9, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 7
SQ spontaneous casting (*summon nature's ally* spells), trackless step, woodland stride, wild empathy +3
Feats Animal Affinity, Skill Focus (Handle Animal)
Skills Handle Animal +9, Craft (livery) +5, Knowledge (nature) +1, Listen +9, Ride +1, Survival +5
Possessions combat gear, hide armor, club

Tactics: If he hears the sounds of battle, Bale cowers in his room, paralyzed with terror. Only when the PCs enter his room does he act, casting spells to cover his escape to area **16**. There he immediately opens the pens, releasing two dire toads to fight with him.

15. Saddle Room

This room contains artisan's tools, a wooden work bench, and raw materials for making exotic saddles for dire toad mounts.

Treasure: Bale is in the process of making a special military saddle for Wingclipper. It is of masterwork quality,

carved with elaborate decorations and fitted with cold-iron buckles and a holster for a longbow. It is worth 880 gp.

16. Toad Stables (EL 7)

This room is partially collapsed, and the entire far wall has fallen into the swamp. It is drafty and dense with moisture, and the crumbling stone walls are covered with a layer of dark blue mold. The far wall has been replaced with a number of swinging doors made of rotting wood.

Water fills the southern half of this room, and each of the five toads is kept in one of the small pens. Dead animals are stacked in a corner.

Creatures: Three of the toads in this stable are currently on duty, but the other two are unbridled and capable of using their attacks. The pens are made of rickety wood, but the toads do not try to escape on their own. If released, they immediately attack the nearest non-toad within range. The exception is Bale, who has fed, groomed, and charmed these animals repeatedly throughout their captivity.

Advanced Dire Toads (2): hp 55 each; see page 30.

Wooden Stable Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 3; hp 12; Break DC 10.

17. Vine-Shrouded Hallway (CR 3)

This hallway is covered with rubble and puddles of water. Vines and other small lichen grow from the floor. The east end is sealed off with rubble, while the west end contains crumbling stairs that lead upward.

Creatures: An assassin vine lurks in this hallway, planted by Wingclipper as a defense against intruders. The hold's inhabitants provide small pieces of food to keep it busy as they carefully step past it.

Assassin Vine: hp 32; *Monster Manual* 20.

18. Cold Iron Armory (EL 4)

Steam rises from the earthen floor of this dark, moist room. The sweet smell of incense overshadows the fainter smell of rotting meat. The area is decorated with archery equipment and artisan's tools, which line the walls and small workbenches. In the center of the south wall, a small altar glows with two braziers on either side of a cold iron statue dedicated to Nerull, the God of Death.

A small forge is set up in the center of the room, a tiny red glow emanating from underneath it. In the far corner, a cold iron floor-cover has been built into the drier ground.

Creatures: When Wingclipper began his war, he needed to learn the weaknesses of the fey. The death-worshipping deep halflings, nestled in the blackest earth under the forest floor, held this knowledge, and were happy to share it with the vengeful ranger.

Their representative is Unish Mul, a master blacksmith specializing in cold iron armaments. His small frame is bulging with an almost dwarven musculature, and he bears many self-inflicted scars. He reverently worships Nerull, and believes that the ore's properties are a gift from the Lord of Death, meant to pierce illusion and reveal the grim mortality of life.

He has set up his forge in this chamber, lovingly hammering bolts, arrows, and swords for Wingclipper and his followers.

Unish Mul **CR 4**

Male deep halfling cleric 4 (Nerull)
NE Medium humanoid
Monster Manual 150
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +2, Listen +4
Languages Common, Goblin, Halfling

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15
hp 26 (4 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Spd 20 ft.
Melee cold iron heavy mace +7 (1d6+3)
Ranged cold iron dagger +9 (1d3+3/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2
Special Atk death touch 1/day (+7 melee touch, 4d6 damage), rebuke undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+5, 4th)
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of neutralize poison*
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4 [CL 5 for evil spells])
2nd—*bull's strength, cure moderate wounds, darkness, descrate*[D]
1st—*bless, cause fear*[D] (DC 13), *divine favor, doom* (DC 13), *obscuring mist*
0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance*
D Domain spell; **E** Evil spell; **Domains** Death, Evil

Abilities Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12
SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells), stonecunning
Feats Combat Casting, Iron Will
Skills Concentration +7, Craft (weaponsmithing) +9, Heal +4, Hide +7, Listen +4
Possessions combat gear, masterwork cold iron chain shirt, 2 cold iron daggers, cold iron heavy mace, holy symbol of Nerull

Deep Halfling, warrior 1: hp 5; *Monster Manual* 149.

Tactics: As soon as Unish sees the PCs, he orders his minion to charge, as he casts as many defensive spells as he can. He fights to the death, and shouts out a loving praise to Nerull with his last breath.

19. Deep Halfling Burrow (EL 3)

This large area has been dug out and drained, though there are still moist places along the earthen walls. The air is oppressive and stagnant, and smoky heat radiates from two braziers at opposite ends of the room. Four straw pallets are set up here, as well as two large chests. There is no light source other than a dim red glowing on either end.

Creatures: Two deep halflings in Unish Mul's service rest here. Also standing guard are two undead wolf skeletons, found by the deep halflings upon their arrival. If Unish Mul is alive, the undead attack any Medium creature that comes through the trap door, as ordered. If Unish Mul is dead, the PCs find the halflings fending off the unrebuked skeletons. The duplicitous halflings cry for help, but backstab the PCs at the first opportunity.

Wolf Skeletons (2): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 226.

Deep Halfling, warrior 1 (2): hp 5; *Monster Manual* 149.

Treasure: Both chests contain the possessions of the halflings: holy symbols of

Nerull, 2 black pearls (250 gp each), and 422 gp.

20. Collapsed Dome (EL 2)

The stairs end in a domed room with crumbling walls. The west wall has fallen, and portions of the fifteen-foot-high ceiling have given way, revealing open sky and the tip of a broken tower above. A large, rotted log completely blocks the far door. Growing on and around the log are several plants and fungi giving off the faint smell of decay.

Creatures: A nest of Small monstrous centipedes has made their home inside the log, feeding off of the grubs and other insects that live there. If the log is disturbed, they attack immediately.

Small Monstrous Centipedes (6): hp 2 each; *Monster Manual* 286.

Tactics: Wingclipper, always paranoid, uses this room to gain access to area 22, having abandoned the traditional entrance. He keeps a ladder on the landing above, pulling it up behind him after he enters. He placed the log here to block off his inner chambers.

21. Wingclipper's Room

This large space was once two separate rooms, but the central wall has been removed and the rubble cleared out. Odds and ends of wooden furniture litter the room, ill-used and in need of repair. Dangling from the walls and desks are a number of grim trophies: a centaur's tail, two desiccated spriggan heads, and the preserved corpses of grigs floating in jars of brine. A rusted iron ladder ascends through a trap door in the northeast corner.

Wingclipper no longer inhabits this room, except to plan his next hunt, choosing to spend the majority of his time in area 22. A DC 15 Appraise check reveals that the ruined furniture is of Turvin craftsmanship.

22. Landing (EL 7)

This open-air roof was once just another floor in a tall keep, before the elements destroyed everything above it. The northwest portion is strewn with remnants of a broken tower, its ruins still rising twenty feet above the landing. A hole has been carved into one of the tower walls, providing a usable entrance. A pallet and a few personal items lie against the south wall, and a hooked ladder rests against the broken west wall.

The edges of the landing overlook a 50-foot drop into the waters below. The gray ooze from area 12 takes the opportunity to attack anyone that falls into the swamp.

Wingclipper has most likely heard the party's approach, and grimly awaits them. If he is still unaware of their presence, the PCs find him staring out at the forest, fully armed for an upcoming hunt. At no point does he move to help any of his followers below, trusting them to take care of any non-fey who approach the ruins.

This fell hunter is tall and thin, with tangled black hair and a week's growth of beard. One of his eyes is brown, and the other is milky white. His expression is grim and resolved, broken only by a rasping cough from overexposure to the elements.

Agrio "Wingclipper" Starkson CR 7
Male human ranger 7
LE Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Spot +12, Listen +10
Languages Common, Goblin, Sylvan

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 34 (7 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk cold iron shortsword +12/+7 (1d6+3/19–20) or
mwk cold iron shortsword +10/+7 (1d6+3/19–20) and
mwk cold iron shortsword +10/+7 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +11/+6 (1d8+4/x3)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10
Atk Options favored enemy +2 (humanoid [elf]), +4 (fey)
Combat Gear *dust of appearance*, *potion of darkvision*, *potion of resist energy (fire)*, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (3)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 3)
1st—*entangle* (DC 13), *longstrider*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 13
SQ woodland stride, wild empathy +10
Feats Endurance, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (shortsword)
Skills Handle Animal +6, Hide +9, Jump +8, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Ride +5 Search +8, Spot +12, Survival +12 (+14 aboveground, +14 when following tracks), Tumble +6
Possessions combat gear, masterwork chain shirt, +1 *composite longbow* with 50 cold iron arrows, 2 masterwork cold iron short swords, *cloak of resistance +1*, *eye of discernment*

Tactics: If the PCs attempt to parley, Wingclipper speaks with them until he learns that they have been sent by the fey. At that point, he fires one shot with his longbow, then pulls out his short swords to attack. If he thinks the PCs are deceiving him, he attacks immediately. He targets any elves and half-elves first, before moving on to spellcasters.

Development: If Wingclipper falls below 8 hit points without losing consciousness, he surrenders, throwing down his swords and shouting that he has failed. Only at that moment does he reveal the reasons for his revenge. Under his tunic, he keeps two items on chains, a locket with a painted portrait of his sister and Banba's missing horn.

If Wingclipper is killed, the PCs still find the picture and the horn. A DC 8 Search check reveals a hidden catch that opens the other side of the locket. The words "Medley Starkson" are written on the back, as well as a note with the following text:

"I swear by the sun, the moon, and all the things that crawl upon the world, you will be avenged for your wrongful death."

23. Ruined Tower (EL 2)

The tower has almost completely collapsed, leaving only five feet of usable space inside. Within the rubble sits a glittering mound of gold and siver coins.

New Magic Item: Eye of Discernment

This milky white glass eye is placed into an empty eye socket. Once inserted, it gives the wearer the ability to *see invisibility*, as the spell, for as long as it is used. The wearer cannot judge distance, and receives a –2 penalty to all ranged attacks.

Moderate divination; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Items, *see invisibility*; Price: 12,000 gp; Weight: —.

Creatures: Wingclipper keeps a large viper to guard his treasure. It attacks anyone who opens the door.

Large viper: hp 14; *Monster Manual* 280.

Treasure: Wingclipper's stash contains 720 gp, 912 sp, and a carved wood cat figurine worth 75 gp.

Event 3: Banba Claims his Horn (EL 7)

Unknown to the PCs, Banba followed the party with two thorn bodyguards. Not wishing to let good fortune pass him by, he desires to see Wingclipper's death himself, and ensure that his role in the affair remains a secret. He follows the PCs through the swamps, remaining far enough back to prevent them from detecting his presence.

After Wingclipper's encounter begins, keep track of the number of rounds that pass. On round fifteen, Banba appears at the entrance, his hand reaching for his shortbow. He is covered in mud from his journey through the swamp.

He offers congratulations and thanks, attempting to Bluff his horn away from the PCs. He explains away the death of Medley, saying that it was a mistake and it was her fault she fell off the cliff. If the PCs are unimpressed, he offers a bribe in the amount of 1,500 gp to keep things quiet from the Gossamer Court. As a last resort, he pleads with the PCs, saying that he is a satyr, and it's in his nature to desire the bacchanal, and there are no choices for him.

All the while, Banba's true goal is to stall until the two thorns sneak into position behind the PCs. When the thorns are in position, they strike. If the PCs move to restrain Banba initially, or begin spell casting, the thorns forgo stealth and attack from wherever they are.

THORNS (2) **CR 4**

N Small fey

Monster Manual III 172

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision, Spot +9, Listen +9

Languages Common, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 17

hp 33 (6 HD) **DR** 5/cold iron

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Spd 20 ft.

Melee longsword +8 (1d6+3/19–20)

Ranged longbow +6 (1d6/x3)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2

Atk Options sleep arrows (DC 16), sneak attack +2d6

Abilities Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 13

Feats Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Hide +17, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Search +9, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9

Possessions leather armor, buckler, longsword, longbow with 20 arrows and 5 *sleep arrows*

Sleep Arrows (Ex) Any opponent struck by a sleep arrow must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or be affected as though by a *sleep* spell, regardless of the creature's Hit Dice. The save DC is Charisma-based, and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Banba; hp 60; see page 27.

Development: If Wingclipper is still alive, he goes after Banba immediately, straining to break any bonds and impediments (using his bare hands if necessary). If Banba dies, Wingclipper breaks down into loud, gut-wrenching sobs, punctuated by rasping coughs.

The dispassionate thorn bodyguards cease their attack upon Banba's death. If unrestrained, they make a running jump from the walls of the landing to leap into the trees below. With a DC 15 Spot check, they can be seen working their way into the woods.

Concluding the Adventure

Once Banba is dead, the threat of Wingclipper is gone, whether he still lives or not. With the satyr's broken appendage in their possession, the PCs can easily return to the emissaries and prove that Banba had been the underlying problem all along. If the PCs manage to capture the satyr and bring him to the Gossamer Court, he faces a shadowy death penalty at the hands of Ivicerus.

After the sentence is carried out, Ivicerus offers the PCs a small diamond from the shadow realm worth 1,750 gp and advises the party to make a quick return to Turvin.

The mayor in Turvin happily gives the promised 2,000 gp reward, and offers a 30% discount on any items from the *Player's Handbook*.

If Wingclipper is still alive, he lives on as a broken man. After the flame within him has been extinguished, he finds that he has nothing left to live for. If the PCs take him to the authorities, his conviction is difficult, as he killed no humanoids and caused no direct harm to claimed property. If left alone, he takes up woodcarving in Turvin, living out the rest of his bitter days in a run-down cottage.

When the Gossamer Court learns of what has transpired, they slowly reclaim the lands to the north. Thorns enforce the river border, preventing fey from entering the southern portion of Dahmoril Woods. These laws, combined with Banba's treachery, spark a bitter internal debate over fey interactions with mortals. Battle lines are drawn, as both sides ready themselves for civil war.

Ivicerus gives ear to both camps, insidiously using the civil unrest to corrupt the entire court with his own followers, including evil fey and deep halflings. The shadar-kai wizard eventually seeks to overthrow the current leadership, to become regent, spreading his dark influence in a new order of corruption and shadow.

Christopher Wissel is a social worker from Indianapolis, Indiana. This is his first published adventure. Special thanks to his fiancée, Jackie, for her love and support.

Scaling the Adventure

"Wingclipper's Revenge" is designed for a group of four 4th-level PCs, but with work it can be adapted for use by 2nd–3rd-level characters, or 5th–6th level characters. Don't forget to modify the amout of treasure given in the adventure appropriately. All NPCs should have their class levels adjusted to reflect changes in average party level. Specific changes to the adventure include:

2nd–3rd Level: Reduce the number of splinterwaifs to one, and replace Remi with 2 Large spiders. Have Grevarg Murt fight the PCs on foot, and remove the gray ooze. Only one thorn bodyguard accompanies Banba.

5th–6th Level: In the pixie ambush, add in a nymph to the ambush party. Give the hobgoblin soldiers a fighter level, and give Wingclipper a pair of trained worgs.

THE PORTENT

PETER BERGTING

Caverns of the Ooze Lord

BY CAMPBELL PENTNEY,
BY UDON WITH DAX GORDINE AND GALA FERRIERE,
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI,
ANY SETTING, MID-LEVEL (6TH–12TH), RURAL AND DUNGEON CRAWL,

Something's not right with the thorp of Verdinica. The locals are quiet and withdrawn, and seem strangely nervous about answering questions from outsiders. Why do they wear such thick clothing in the midst of a hot and muggy summer? And what sort of "prisoner" could make the strange, sloshing noises that come from the gaol?

"Caverns of the Ooze Lord" is a D&D adventure designed for four 8th-level characters. The adventure takes place in a remote thorp near a heavily forested area, far removed from any large cities. As such, it should be easy to place into any campaign setting.

Adventure Background

The thorp of Verdinica is a quiet settlement, far removed from the main trade routes and nestled in a thick and wild forest. Verdinica's inhabitants are a superstitious bunch, content with local tradition and disinterested in the bustling cities that seem too far away to be real. Verdinicans are a hardy lot—they provide for themselves and remain tight-knit, only interacting with the outside world when infrequent travelers pass through or the monthly supply caravan stops by.

Unfortunately, Verdinica's remote location and self-sufficient citizens make it a perfect incubator for villainy and corruption. Regarded by the locals as a lunatic hermit, an old and strange cleric of Obad-Hai named Morbion has lived in the nearby woods as long as anyone can remember. Left alone to his eccentricities, Morbion's growing obsession with slimes, fungi, and oozes has gone unnoticed by the locals. Often, he mixes strains of these dangerous creatures and plants into drugs, but it wasn't until a strange dream compelled him to explore the notorious Sickstone Caves that he became a true menace.

Deep inside these poisonous caverns, Morbion discovered two things that would change his life forever. The first was an immense pool of highly

dangerous olive slime—an ooze that transformes those who touch it into monstrous slime creatures. The second was an ancient and forgotten shrine to Juiblex, the Faceless Lord. Morbion became obsessed with the shrine, and came to believe it was the source of the strange dreams that had lured him to the Sickstone Caves. As his body began to shift and change to match his blossoming dementia, he finally abandoned the worship of Obad-Hai and embraced the teachings of the Faceless Lord.

Today, Morbion has grown to hate the "Slaves of Shape," as he refers to creatures with fixed, stable forms. He views ooze as nature's perfect form, and hopes to use the olive slime to free the Slaves of Shape from their cursed rigidity. He starts with the thorp of Verdinica, and by the time this adventure begins, his slimy tendrils have penetrated deeply into the inhabitants. Now, three dozen villagers are infected with olive slime, and several more have been completely transformed into shambling thralls of the Faceless Lord. As these creatures germinate, Morbion leads them back to the Sickstone Caves, where he fortifies and nurtures them with the flesh of other captured villagers.

Adventure Synopsis

The player characters arrive in Verdinica and find the place strangely hostile and secretive. Inquiries uncover disappearances, reports of people acting strange, unusual sounds echoing out of the local gaol, and other unsettling events. Before long, the PCs discover that things in Verdinica are much more dire than they may have suspected—they may interrupt a sacrifice in the basement of the local church, or could release an infected tendriculos from the gaol. Their discoveries eventually lead them to the Sickstone Caverns, where they confront Morbion's cult of the Faceless Lord.

Adventure Hooks

Choose one of the following hooks to get the PCs to travel to Verdinica—ultimately, they should discover the truth of what's going on in the thorp on their own, at which point they'll have to decide how to handle the situation festering there.

- A local baron suspects that one of his subjects, a man named Jed Lethryn, is withholding taxes. The baron hires the PCs to travel to the thorp of Verdinica to speak to Jed about handing over what is owed.
- Recent rumors from the thorp of Verdinica have given a priest of St. Cuthbert cause for worry—he's afraid that the cleric stationed in the thorp may be teaching heretical beliefs to the rural folk there, and asks the party to investigate the veracity of these rumors.

Chapter One: The Thing in the Cell

The thorp of Verdinica is nestled at the edge of a dense forest in the foothills of a low mountain range, a three-day ride from the nearest town. A DC 18 bardic knowledge or Knowledge (geography) check reveals that Verdinica was once a prosperous mining settlement, but when the mines went dry many locals moved on and the thorp became largely self sufficient. This adventure takes place during a hot, muggy summer—as the adventure progresses, take the time now and then to impress upon the PCs how cloying and close the atmosphere feels in Verdinica, but don't draw their attention to the fact that some of the thorp's inhabitants wear too much clothing for the weather. Let them notice this clue on their own.

Read the following as the PCs get their first glimpse of the thorp.

The dark wall of the oppressive forest parts up ahead, falling back to form a large clearing in which nearly three dozen buildings stand. The road passes over a ten-foot-wide creek at the edge of town on a rickety wooden bridge barely wide enough accomadate a wagon. The road winds through the center of the clearing, passing a sizable inn, several wood shingled one-story houses, and a squat, square bunker that could be the local gaol. The tallest building in the thorp is a wooden church, its sagging steeple adorned with the encircled cross of St. Cuthbert. The road leads to the stoop of this church but no further, as if slyly admitting that the thorp of Verdinica lies at the end of civilization. Everything shimmers in the heat of the summer, and there are only a few locals to be seen—an old man sitting on a lopsided chair in front of the inn clutches a worn blanket about his body as he gnaws on a loaf of bread, a lone guard dressed in chainmail leans against a wooden post in front of the gaol, and three children sullenly splash in the creek south of the bridge in an attempt to escape the heat.

Verdinica is dying, although its inhabitants are loath to admit it. Verdinicans have traditionally been a quiet, insulated lot, with little interest in what may or may not be going on in the outside world. This has proven to be quite conducive to Morbion's needs, and he's been able to convert or capture locals more or less without resistance. Until recently, the thorp had a population of nearly 70 souls. Morbion's stealthy abduction of hunters, trappers, woodcutters, and other folk who spend time in the woods has eroded the thorp's population, as has his slow infection of the locals with olive slime. Currently, there are only 58 people living in Verdinica, of which 23 have been infected with olive slime.

Verdinica (thorp): Conventional; AL N; Population 58; 40 gp limit; Assets 580 gp; Isolated (96% human, 2% dwarf, 2% half-elf).

Authority Figures: **Jed Lethryn,** mayor (LN male human aristocrat 2), **Darion Averlander**, head watchman (N male half elf fighter 4), **Codius Teragnith**, town priest (CE male human cleric 7).

A Touch of the Green

Currently, 23 of Verdinica's citizens have been indoctrinated into Cult of the Faceless Lord and are undergoing the slow transformation into slime creatures. They hide their glistening, green patches of skin by wearing heavy clothing (despite the heat), and before they are too far gone to pass as human, they continue the charade of their former lives, awaiting the call to join their master in the Sickstone Caves. Morbion's greatest catch is the thorp's priest, Codius, who

now forms the backbone of his conversion tactics. He selects a member of the thorp for indoctrination, invites them to a meeting at the church, and then infects them with olive slime before returning them to society. Codius casts *restoration* on himself every few days to offset the Intelligence-draining effect of his condition, which has effectively stalled his inevitable transformation into a full-fledged slime creature, allowing him to maintain his role as Morbion's primary agent in Verdinica.

The infected locals initially leave the PCs alone, actively avoiding contact with outsiders. If a PC attempts to interact with one of the infected, he may make a DC 20 Sense Motive check after a minute of conversation to realize there is something wrong with the NPC. A DC 25 Search check is enough for a character to notice a patch of tainted skin on an infected person—this check is automatic if most of the NPC's bulky clothing is removed. A *remove disease* or similar spell immediately cures an infected local, but doing so also alerts the other infected victims in town immediately, who can sense the sudden loss of one of their own via their empathic link.

If the PCs manage to cure one of the locals, he suddenly grows horrified and panicked, and attempts to flee the area at once, shrieking all the time about "The GREEN!" His fear makes his initial attitude unfriendly—if made friendly, he'll tell the PCs of how he was lured into the basement of the church of St. Cuthbert, tied to an altar, and forced to drink some horrific green sludge. After that, he remembers little more than a horrible sense of growing confusion and fear mixed with constant hunger. The local is terrified of the church of St. Cuthbert and its priest Codius, and wants only to leave the thorp at the earliest opportunity.

Three of the remaining locals (the priest Codius, head watchman Darion, and the old prospector Thadius Kemplar) were infected before Morbion gave Codius an olive slime to use in his midnight anointings. These three NPCs were the last to be brought through the Sickstone Caves for infection, and if any of them are cured of their condition and made friendly, they can tell the PCs about how they were abducted, brought to the Sickstone Caves, and given a strange pink crystal to hold before they were hauled into the caves and brought to a large cavern (area **16**) where they were forced to drink from a large pool of slime. Their memories of the caves are hazy and useless, but they do recall Morbion himself (they describe him as a horrific, half-melted man).

The Infected: Of the 23 cultists, 8 have transformed fully into slime creatures and now dwell in the Sickstone Caves. The remaining 15 are still in the thorp, where they continue to uphold the façade of humanity, eagerly awaiting orders from Codius or Morbion to overwhelm the rest of the thorp. At this point, most of Verdinica's leaders have been infected with olive slime, including all of the town guards (including Darion Averlander, the head watchman), the thorp's priest Codius and his five acolytes, and two of the town's commonfolk (a shopkeeper named Roland and an old prospector named Thadius Kemplar). The infected maintain their daily routine, but the rest of the town is starting to suspect something (perhaps the plague?) has come to roost in their community.

Statistics for the infected souls of Verdinica are compiled here, since the PCs can come into conflict with them at several locations in the thorp. If the PCs are in Verdinica for more than a day or two, some of these infected leave their posts in the thorp to seek out the Sickstone Caves, due to their impending transformations. This adventure assumes the PCs figure out what's going on in town well before this occurs—if events in your game run otherwise, make sure to adjust the number of slime creatures encountered in the Sickstone Caves as appropriate.

Of these 15, only Codius and his five acolytes have been wholly exposed to Morbion's cult. They have accepted the Faceless Lord as their master, and have grown more sadistic and cruel with each passing day. The other infected townsfolk do their best to hide their condition and wait patiently for the call to the caves—they're not evil, but neither are they predisposed to cooperate with outsiders.

Infected Commoners (2) **CR 1/2**
Human commoner 1
N Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common
AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 3 (1 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +2
Spd 30 ft.
Melee dagger +0 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +0
Abilities Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10 (currently 5), Wis 10, Cha 10
Feats Alertness, Iron Will
Skills Handle Animal +4, Listen +2, Profession (varies) +4, Ride +4, Spot +2
Possessions dagger

Infected Guards (6) **CR 1/2**
Human warrior 1
N Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common
AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15
hp 5 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0
Spd 30 ft.
Melee longsword +2 (1d8+1/19–20)
Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2
Abilities Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10 (currently 6), Wis 11, Cha 10
Feats Alertness, Weapon Focus (light crossbow)
Skills Climb +5, Intimidate +4, Listen +2, Ride +4, Spot +2
Possessions chain shirt, light wooden shield, longsword, light crossbow with 10 bolts

Darion Averlander **CR 4**
Male half-elf fighter 4
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Elven
AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17
hp 30 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0
Spd 20 ft.
Melee +1 *longsword* +9 (1d8+6/19–20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10 (currently 5), Wis 8, Cha 13
Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (light crossbow), Weapon Specialization (longsword)
Skills Intimidate +8, Listen +2, Ride +8, Search –2, Spot +2
Possessions chainmail, heavy steel shield, +1 *longsword*, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts

CODIUS TERAGNITH **CR 7**
Male human cleric 7 (Juiblex)
CE Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15
hp 45 (7 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** +8

Spd 20 ft.
Melee +1 *heavy mace* +8 (1d8+2)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6
Atk Option smite 1/day (+4 attack, +7 damage)
Special Atk rebuke undead 4/day (+3; 2d6+8)
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* (3), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of remove disease*, *potion of shield of faith +2*
Spells Prepared (CL 7th; CL 8th for evil spells)
4th—*restoration*, *unholy blight*[DE] (DC 17)
3rd—*contagion*[D] (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *prayer*
2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 15), *shatter*[D] (DC 15), *silence* (DC 15)
1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*[DE]
0—*cure minor wounds* (3), *detect good*, *detect magic*, *light*
D domain spell; **E** evil spell; **Domains** Destruction, Evil

Abilities Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13
SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)
Feats Brew Potion, Iron Will, Persuasive, Weapon Focus (heavy mace)
Skills Bluff +3, Diplomacy +11, Heal +8, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +9
Possessions +1 *chainmail*, +1 *heavy mace*, holy symbol, key to church basement, 800 gp worth of diamond dust

ACOLYTES OF JUIBLEX (5) **CR 1**
Human cleric 1 (Juiblex)
CE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14
hp 9 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

Spd 30 ft.
Melee heavy mace +1 (1d8)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +0
Atk Option smite 1/day (+4 attack, +1 damage)
Special Atk rebuke undead 3/day (+0; 2d6+1)
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*
Spells Prepared (CL 1st, CL 2nd for evil spells)
1st—*command* (DC 12), *cure light wounds*, *protection from good*[DE]
0—*cure minor wounds* (3)
D domain spell; **E** evil spell; **Domains** Destruction, Evil

Abilities Str 11, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)
Feats Weapon Focus (heavy mace)

Verdinica Rumors

d8 Roll	Result
1	"A few families have left town lately. Didn't say farewell or nothing. Sure, things have been better in town, but we've been through dry patches before. Those what took up root and left town ain't welcome back." *(True, but these families didn't just leave—they were captured by Morbion.)*
2	"Been some strange tracks in the woods of late. Large tracks, look almost like bird tracks 'cept for the size. Big as hogsheads, some of them. For a few silver, I can take you to see them." *(False; this unscrupulous soul intends to lead the PCs into the woods on a wild goose chase, abandon them, and sneak back to town with his take.)*
3	"Saw Yurl and his family a few nights ago wandering off into the woods to the north. Old Yurl was carrying the young'un, and his wife seemed to be arguing somethin' fierice as she followed with little Flora. They ain't been back since. Reckon they left town for the big city, I suppose... though there ain't no roads up that way." *(Partially true; Yurl did indeed lead his family into the woods, but not to the city. He'd become infected and brought his family to the Sickstone Caves so they could join him there.)*
4	"This heat is something! Hot as fresh milk out there. Can't reckon why some folk dress like it's winter, though. And those guards must be dyin' in their armor. Sometimes it's good to be a farmer." *(True; those who wear too much clothing are infected; they're hiding signs of their contagion.)*
5	"Don't tell no one I said this, but Father Codius been acting funny of late. Hell... all them cleric types been acting funny. I seen lights burning in the church after midnight, and they done stopped holdin' regular ceremonies. Father Codius says they done so on account of preparing for some big sermon in a week, but I ain't buyin' it." *(True; the clerics have converted to worship of Juiblex and are preparing to lead the final push to infect the rest of Verdinica.)*
6	"Not sure what's up with Mayor Lethryn. He jus' stays in his house cross't the street from the gaol and don't seem t'care about things no more. It's like he's given up. Maybe he's packing his stuff and getting ready to skip town!" *(False; the mayor has other reasons for withdrawing into his home; see area 8.)*
7	"So I heard something a might strange last night. I were out behind the gaol, lookin' for my kid's damnable cat what run off again, and there was this weird noise comin' up from one of the low winder's long the back of the building. Like a man pulling a boot out of a boggy bit'o land, only slower. Chilled my bones, for some reason." *(True; this was the infected tendriculos Morbion smuggled into the gaol several nights ago during a thunderstorm.)*
8	"We haven't really had much trouble with goblins lately. Maybe the heat killed them off!" *(Partially true; the goblins have in fact fallen victim to Morbion.)*

Skills Diplomacy +4, Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +4

Possessions chain shirt, heavy mace

Exploring Verdinica

Verdinica consists of 24 buildings, most of which are one-story wooden houses with sagging roofs and weathered frames. These are the homes of the thorp's remaining families. These folk keep to themselves and live meager lives. They may have an inkling that something strange is going on in town, but aside from rumors have nothing concrete to offer in the way of explanations. If the PCs ask about local news, a DC 15 Gather Information check uncovers one of the listed rumors. Unless the Gather Information check result exceeds 25, the infected of Verdinica quickly hear of the PCs' interest in town and report the problem to Codius, who decides to take matters into his own hands rather than wait for Morbion's next visit to town for guidance (see Exposing the Cult).

1. The Smoking Dragon Inn

The common room of this inn contains a haze of smoke and a handful of grim-faced farmers. Hanging from the wall is a ragged green dragon's head the size of a horse's head, poorly mounted and supported by several lengths of twine attached to bent nails in the beams above.

None of the individuals within are infected (but see Development below), but neither are they particularly friendly to outsiders. The appearance of the PCs immediately puts them on guard, and they refuse to speak openly in their presence. The dwarven innkeeper is named **Dreygan Graygravel** (LN male dwarf expert 2), and he refuses to serve the characters if they ask, muttering something about low stock. Dreygan and the farmers have unfriendly attitudes, and won't talk unless they're made friendly.

If the PCs break the ice, the farmers and Dreygan speak in hushed voices, as if fearful of eavesdroppers. In addition to hearing one or two rumors, a farmer with sunken eyes named Belan has something more to say.

"Something terrible is happening to this place. In the last week, a lot of people have gone missing, and that's not the whole matter. A heck of a lot of folk have taken to acting mighty strange, like they're always hungry and cold or somethin'. The mayor, well he don't come out of his office at all these days, leaving Darion the head watchman to watch over us. But even Darion doesn't seem like his old self. He used to be a real chirpy fellow."

Another farmer takes a swig of ale and wipes his mouth before speaking, "Sure, but can you really blame everybody for being suspicious? People been talking of fey spirits bewitching villagers from their beds and into the fairy realm where they are enslaved forever..."

A third farmer interrupts. "Don't be a fool, Bryce! I think we all know the real truth here. We're being slowly taken over by some kind of thing that can change its shape to look like you or me. Once it has eaten it can take its form and gain the trust of its next victim!"

The talk continues along this vein for some time unless the PCs interrupt—aside from wild rumors, these folk don't really have much to say.

The Smoking Dragon is the only inn in Verdinica, and the six rooms on the second floor are always vacant. Dreygan tries to charge 5 gp per room unless made friendly, in which case he reduces his price to normal—2 sp a night.

Development: One of the infected, a grizzled old prospector named **Thadius Kemplar** (N human male expert 3) constantly sits on a lopsided chair on the porch. Thadius has long been a fixture at the inn, and the locals think nothing of his presence, but since he became infected he keeps a keen eye on those who come and go from the place. If he sees the PCs enter, he leaves as soon as they're inside to report their presence to Darion before returning to his "post" here to gnaw on bread and huddle under his ratty blanket.

If the PCs take more than a day to expose the cult of the infected, Codius and some of Darion's guards abduct Dreygan and anoint him with olive slime, inducting him into the circle of the infected. At this point, he becomes unfriendly to the PCs again—he won't immediately turn them out onto the street, but he does double the charge for a room each night. His change in personality should be a major clue to the PCs.

2. Agatha's Hut

This hut must belong to the village herbalist, judging by the pungent plants growing in the nearby garden and the mysterious symbols and runes scratched into the hut's walls. The door hangs open, but there's no sign of activity within.

Once the home of an herbalist named Agatha, this hut is now empty. Agatha has transformed into a slime creature and now dwells in the Sickstone Caves. An investigation of the hut's interior reveals that it's been uninhabited for over a week, and that raccoons have made a nest within and have generally made a mess of the place. A DC 15 Search check uncovers 10 gold pieces and an *elixir of love*. The locals have long had a healthy dose of fear of the eccentric old Agatha—she's gone on long trips into the woods before and left her home unattended, so they don't suspect anything is amiss here.

3. Gaol (EL 8)

The town gaol is a squat stone structure that looks somewhat out of place amidst the quaint buildings surrounding it. Only one story tall, the windows are all barred and tightly shuttered from within.

Verdinica's entire force of nine guards lives within this structure, along with their captain Darion. All ten are infected. No one is allowed into the gaol, and there are always two infected guards at attention before the front entrance. There is no other entrance into the gaol aside from the windows, but if a character sneaks around to the backside of

the building and makes a DC 25 Listen check, he can hear a strange sloshing or sucking sound, similar to the sound of a man walking slowly through a swamp, issuing from behind one of the tightly-shuttered ground-level windows in the center of the southern wall.

Apart from the guards and the creature they've hidden in the basement, there is nothing incriminating in the gaol.

Barred Window: 1-inch-thick bars; Hardness 10; hp 30; Bend DC (24).

Creature: The guards have no interest in talking to the PCs, but if pressed or threatened, one relents and steps inside to fetch Darion. The infected head watchman listens to the PCs' requests, and although he refuses to let them into the gaol ("Off limits to citizens—you understand!"), he does his best to mollify their concerns, indicating that the strange problems in town likely have something to do with mischievous fey in the woods to the south. Of course, this is a lie—Darion hopes to trick the PCs into wasting time hunting fey in the woods while he and the other infected prepare to indoctrinate them into the Faceless Lord's embrace.

The strange sounds within the gaol come from an infected tendriculos that Morbion smuggled into the thorp after he gained control of the guards. The tendriculos functions as an emergency guardian—the guards have orders to release the monster into the village if outsiders discover what's going on in town and are attacking any of the infected.

Tendriculos: hp 94; *Monster Manual* 241.

4. Roland's Bits and Pieces (EL 1/2)

All manner of weathered farm tools, lumber, and other general goods lie in neglected bins along the front of this run-down store.

This shop serves as Verdinica's general store, but since most of the thorp's citizens hunt or grow their own food and generally don't have much money, traffic through this place is sparse at best. The shopkeeper is a rotund human man named Roland, and his store sells any item in the *Player's Handbook* worth less than 40 gp. Roland lives in a small room above the shop, and is the most recently infected citizen.

Creature: Roland isn't far along in his infection, but he still wears a heavy coat at all times to conceal the green patches along his neck and back. He watches any strangers who enter his shop with large, rarely-blinking eyes, but says nothing. If attacked or robbed, he begins hollering in a deep, phlegmy voice and tries to escape to the Temple across the street for safety; he only fights to defend himself if cornered.

5. Yurl the Blacksmith (EL 4)

The heavy iron anvil and forge sitting outside this building are untended, and the doors hang open. The building appears to be empty, with discarded tools of the trade strewn forlornly across an iron bench.

Yurl the blacksmith was infected several days ago, although he hid his infection from his wife and two children. When he felt the call of the slime and knew his final transformation was at hand, he led his family into the woods. All four now dwell in the Sickstone Caverns. The locals assume Yurl simply gave up on the thorp and left for a bigger city.

A search of Yurl's home reveals nothing of interest unless a character makes a DC 25 Search check. With this check, a character discovers a strange, discolored crust against the wall near a bed in the back room. The flaking green crust looks almost like dried algae. In fact, it's a dried patch of olive slime that Yurl coughed up the morning he realized his time had come. Attempts to identify the slime with Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks suffer a –5 penalty, due to the desiccated nature of the sample.

6. Farms

The farmers here have yet to be infected, but are still apprehensive of the PCs. They are protective of their families and aren't willing to speak for long.

7. Temple of Saint Cuthbert (EL 8)

This modest church is a simple affair, yet the firm stone building stands tall amidst the simpler abodes nearby. The building's dark wooden doors are inlaid with swirling patterns. A tall steeple bearing the circled cross of St. Cuthbert stands high above the church's facade.

During the day, the temple seems innocent enough, if a bit cluttered. The doors remain closed but unlocked. Those who enter find the place empty, save for a few priests worshiping at a dusty altar. The acolytes greet visitors cheerfully, but ask them to leave since they are busy preparing the church for a reconsecration in a few weeks. If the PCs persist in questioning them, they'll ask them to wait while they fetch the head priest.

A character who examines the chamber for any amount of time and makes a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check immediately notes that the church seems unusually messy and uncared for, as if the acolytes are simply too lazy to keep the place up to standards.

At the back of the church is a locked stone door—Codius carries the key, but the door lock can be picked with a DC 30 Open Lock check. Beyond the door, a narrow flight of stairs leads down to what was once a crypt below the church but now serves as a shrine to Juiblex.

Creatures: Verdinica's priest is Codius Teragnith, a fifty-year-old man who retains the finely muscled body that served him as a king's soldier many years ago. Since his turn to piety, he has earned a reputation as a tough but fair priest of St Cuthbert. He chose Verdinica for its tranquility and isolation, hoping to spread his faith to those far from the cities. Unfortunately, his capture by Morbion and exposure to the olive slime has destroyed more than his mind—in the face of the awesome power of this simple ooze, he abandoned his faith in St. Cuthbert and embraced that of the Faceless Lord.

Codius answers any questions as best he can, blaming any strange goings-on in town on local superstition. He doesn't want the PCs poking around in the church,

Olive Slime Knowledge

Once a character finds an olive slime, he can make a Knowledge (dungeoneering) check to determine what he knows about this rare underground menace.

DC Result

15 Olive slime is an immobile ooze most often found growing deep underground. It attacks with a storm of tendrils that cause numbness, loss of coordination, and eventually paralysis.

20 Olive slime grows in the flesh of those it touches, causing increasing damage to the mind and filling its host with strange urges to protect the source slime. Eventually, these victims transform into hideous slime creatures.

25 Olive slime is difficult to destroy. Weapon blows do no damage to it, nor does electricity, sound, poison, and most forms of magic. Fire, cold, and acid can destroy it, as can *remove disease*.

30 Olive slime reacts violently to green slime, and if the two come in contact, they quickly neutralize each other.

and tries to get them to leave before too long by telling them there's still much work to be done for the reconsecration. If there are any worshipers of St. Cuthbert in the party, Codius may ask one of them (particularly a cleric, but not a paladin) to stay behind to aid in his efforts. Once he's alone with a PC, he and his acolytes try to lure him downstairs to "anoint" him (see Development).

If their dedication to Juiblex is discovered, or if the PCs attack, one of the adepts tries to escape out onto the street to raise the alarm (see Exposing the Cult).

The crypt below the church is approximately forty-feet square. The walls glisten with slime, and the place is lit by a couple of braziers bearing green *continual flames*. At one end of the crypt is a large stone block fitted with chains and manacles, beyond which sit two large silver urns in an empty burial niche. Examination of the walls reveals disturbing patterns, runes, and crude pictures—iconography identifiable with a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check as sacred to the Faceless Lord Juiblex. Anyone with at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (religion) can tell that the markings are obviously not meant for St. Cuthbert.

Every midnight, Codius and his five acolytes use this chamber to offer dark prayers to Juiblex. They're careful to keep their chanting down, but a successful DC 25 Listen check made by someone upstairs is good enough to hear the sounds below. During these rituals, the cultists burn a strange incense in the braziers to heighten their worship. The smoke incurs a –2 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and Will saving throws for 1 hour unless a DC 15 Fortitude save is made—the cultists themselves are immune to this effect of the incense. The left silver urn contains a living olive slime harvested from the pool in the Sickstone Caves. When Codius and his acolytes have lured a victim down here, they lash him to he altar and during a particularly nauseating ceremony, pour olive slime into the victim's mouth, wait for it to poison him, and then return the slime to its urn for the next anointing.

Codius Teragnith: hp 45, see page 42.

Acolytes (5): hp 5 each; see page 42.

Olive Slime: hp 21; see Appendix.

Treasure: The second urn does not contain olive slime; rather, it contains a small collection of five glowing pink crystals. Each crystal is about the same shape and size as a dagger (although if used as a weapon, it is treated as improvised). A DC 15 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check identifies these as cindershard crystals, a rare mineral held by superstition to ward off disease. If the Knowledge (dungeoneering) check exceeds the required DC by 10 or more, the character knows that cindershard crystals counteract the dangerous radiation emitted by sickstone, but have no real effect on other diseases.

Wedged behind the urns is a bone scroll tube. It can be found with a DC 15 Search check—inside is a map of the surrounding woodlands that indicates a path north from town to a large mountain ridge. The point where the path reaches the mountains is marked with an "X." The map bears no labels aside from the name "Verdinica" over the crude depiction of the thorp at the map's lower edge, but it shows the shortest route to the Sickstone Caves.

8. Mayoral Office

This building seems no different than most of the other houses in town, but anyone the PCs ask can tell them that this is the home of Mayor Jed Lethryn. If the PCs knock, the door opens slightly after a wait of a few minutes, only to slam shut immediately. From within comes a shrill voice: "The office is closed for the day I'm afraid. Come back tomorrow!"

Jed Lethryn knows that something strange is going on in Verdinica. He confronted Codius a few days ago with his concerns about how there had been no religious services for several days, and something in the way Codius replied set Jed's hairs on edge. Since then, he's come to believe that everyone else in town is preparing to lynch him. Jed has reason to be afraid; he's been overtaxing the people of Verdinica for several years and keeping the excess for himself before sending on the actual payments to the crown.

Jed's initial attitude is unfriendly, but if the PCs can make him friendly (likely via a loud conversation yelling through his door that informs the infected of the party's arrival in town) with a DC 25 Diplomacy check, he'll agree to let them in to talk to him. He thinks they're undercover agents of the crown, and quickly tries to buy their silence by giving them 350 gp (all of the gold he's skimmed from the taxes over the last several years). If he learns that the PCs have other reasons to be in Verdinica, or if the PCs confide in him their suspicions that something else is going on, he offers to let them stay at his home and use it as a base of operations, as long as he thinks they can save Verdinica (and don't intend to turn him over to the authorities).

Exposing The Cult (EL 9)

The first part of this adventure is fairly freeform; there are numerous ways the PCs can learn about the infected or come to the attention of the cultists. If the PCs

Cindershard

These relatively rare crystals glow with a faint pink light, providing illumination equivalent to that of a candle. A typical cindershard crystal is the same size and weight as a dagger, and can be used as an improvised piercing weapon. Cindershards absorb and neutralize sickstone emanations. A creature carrying a cindershard on his person (but not in an extradimensional area like a *bag of holding*) is immune to the harmful effects of sickstone. Once a cindershard is exposed to sickstone, it "burns out" automatically 24 hours later, turning into a powdery, non-glowing lump of stone.

A cindershard crystal is worth 100 gp.

move quickly, they can maintain the element of surprise and may be able to neutralize a number of the infected before they can get organized. Darion and the town guards are one such group, as are Codius and his acolytes.

Once Codius learns that adventurers have come to Verdinica, his reaction depends on the PCs. If they seem relatively uninterested in the thorp's problems, or don't get in any loud arguments or fights, Codius waits to see if they stay the night in town. If they do, he leads Darion and four of his men on a raid—they strike an hour after midnight and try to silently abduct one of the PCs under the cover of a *silence* spell cast by Codius. If successful, the abducted PC is brought to the crypt below the church for anointing, after which the cultists use the infected PC to lure his fellows, one at a time, back to the church for similar treatment.

Creatures: If the abduction attempt fails, if the infected realize that the PCs are close to exposing them, or if the PCs attack any of the infected, an alarm is quickly raised. At this point, all the infected in town gather near the gaol. Darion has one of his soldiers fire a crossbow at the infected tendriculos. The attack enrages the plant, which quickly crushes the infected soldier. On the next round, the monster flies into a rage and bursts from the side of the gaol in a tremendous explosion of debris.

As the tendriculos attacks, all of the infected in town come to its aid. The tendriculos doesn't differentiate between infected targets and PCs, so the infected are careful to stay out of the plant's reach. They do use tactics like bull rush to try to push PCs into its reach, though. Once this battle begins, the infected realize that there's no turning back, and they fight to the death.

Tendriculos: hp 94; *Monster Manual* 241.

Codius Teragnith: hp 45; see page 42.

Darion Averlander: hp 30; see page 41.

Acolytes of Juiblex (5): hp 5 each; see page 42.

Infected Guards (6): hp 5 each; see page 41.

Infected Commoners (2): hp 3 each; see page 41.

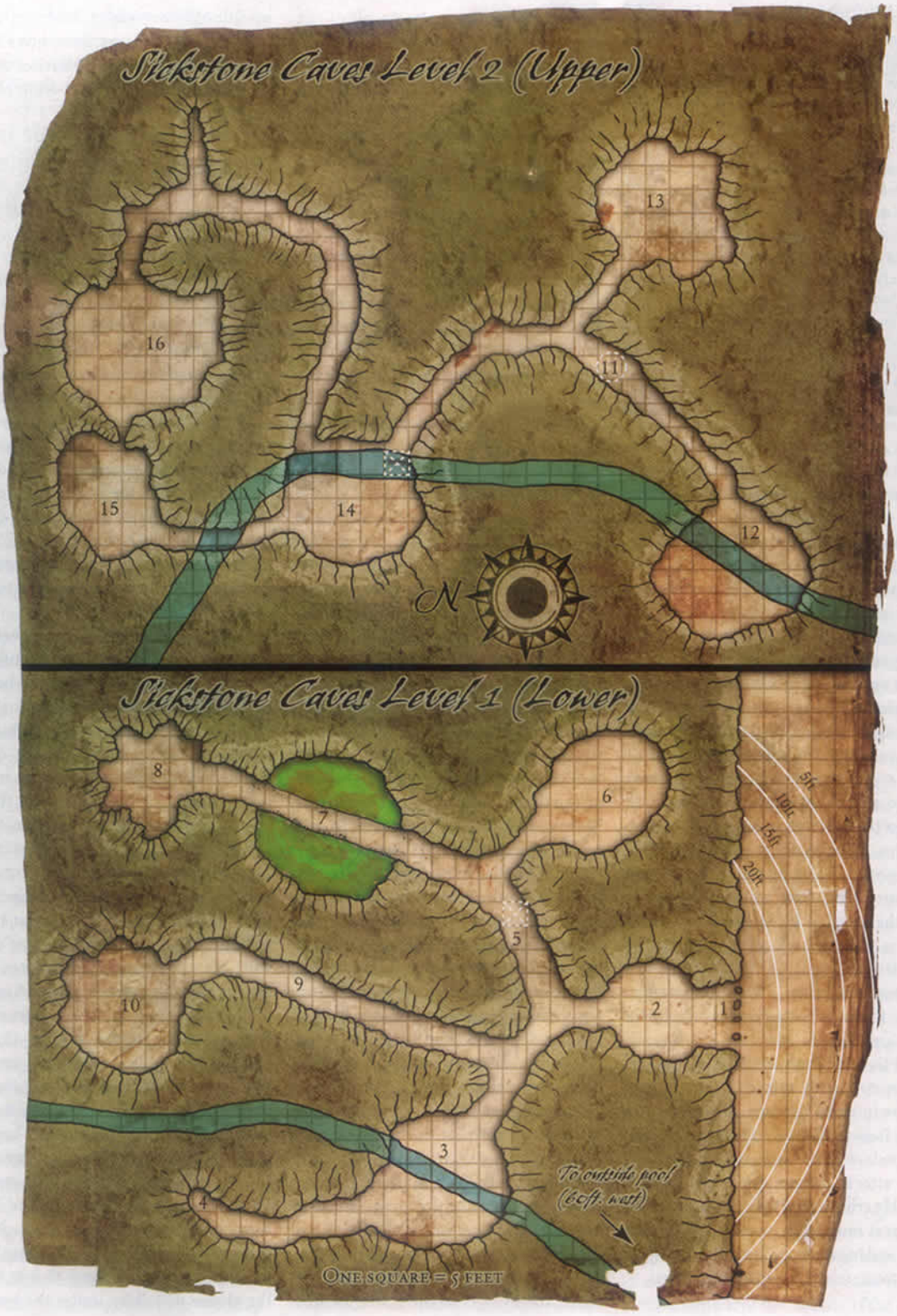
Chapter Two: The Sickstone Caves

Once Codius plays his hand and unleashes the tendriculos on Verdinica, and assuming the PCs manage to defeat the monstrous plant and the infected locals, the miasma of distrust washes away from the locals. They hail the PCs as heroes, and the surviving citizens crowd around them in joy. Foremost among them is Dreygan Graygravel, the dwarven innkeeper of the Smoking Dragon. In the absence of the thorp's mayor (who remains in hiding and largely forgotten in his home), the dwarf quickly becomes the voice of the joyful crowd. He thanks the PCs for their heroism, but points out the fact that this infection had to come from somewhere. He urges them to investigate the gaol and the church for clues to the source of the infection while he organizes the locals to cart off the dead tendriculos to the edge of town and to tend to any wounded or unconscious citizens.

The Sickstone Caves lie 20 miles to the north of town, at the base of a 200-foot-high mountain ridge. Without Codius' map, the PCs must rely on the directions of one of the locals. Without a map, a DC 15 Survival check is required each hour to avoid becoming lost. The woods are thick and oppressive, but the closer the PCs get to the caves, the less wildlife they encounter. Within a mile of the caves, the trees themselves thin out until finally, no vegetation at all grows, forming a 500-foot-wide clearing at the base of the ridge.

The most dangerous feature of the caverns is also the source of the cave's name. In several parts of the cave, large deposits of sickstone run through the floor, ceiling, and walls. Sickstone glows with a nauseating, not-quite-green, not-quite-silver light that provides illumination to a radius of 40 feet. Any creature in range of this illumination must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw each round or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage. A successful save reduces the Constitution damage to 1 point. Anyone in physical contact with sickstone takes a –4 penalty on this saving throw, and any Constitution damage it suffers becomes Constitution drain instead. The damage caused by sickstone results from a magical disease, so creatures immune to magical diseases are immune to the effects of sickstone.

A DC 15 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check allows a character to identify the danger of exposure to sickstone before entering the radius of its illumination. The presence of so much sickstone makes exploring these caverns quite dangerous. All of the passageways in the caverns (and many of the caverns themselves) are tainted in this manner. Areas **4**, **6**, **8**, **15**, and **16** are the only ones in the caverns where the sickstone's taint does not reach. Area **8** provides a portable form of protection from sickstone, but until the PCs discover this, most of them will need to resort to other forms of protection to avoid a painful death. A *periapt of health* provides a perfect defense, as does any magic item that grants immunity to disease. The safest (and easiest) way to avoid the sickstone radiation is to carry a cindershard—when Morbion's minions bring in creatures to baptize them in the Mother Chamber (area **16**), they supply their victims with one of these shards to protect them and keep them whole on the journey through the caves to their sacrifice. The PCs may have recovered several of these shards from the shrine of Juiblex under the temple


Stekstone Caves Level 2 (Upper)
13
16
11
15
14
12
N
Stekstone Caves Level 1 (Lower)
8
6
7
5
9
10
2
1
3
4
5ft
10ft
15ft
20ft
To outside pool
(6cft. wall)
One square = 5 feet

of Saint Cuthbert in Verdinica, but since these crystals burn out after a time, they may need to harvest more of them from area **8** if they make repeated forays into the Sickstone Caves.

1. Cave Entrance (EL 4)

A two-hundred-foot-high cliff face looms over this five-hundred-foot-wide clearing in the woods. No plant life grows in the clearing, leaving only a stony expanse with little cover. The cliff face itself glitters and shines in a somewhat nauseating shade of green. Jagged pinnacles of rock jut from the cliff, and deep rents in its face give it an intimidating look indeed. The far side of the clearing slopes up to the base of the cliff, where a cave entrance beckons. West of this entrance, about a hundred feet away, a muddy, dark waterfall cascades out of the cliff face to plummet thirty feet into a churning pool below.

Little of interest awaits discovery on the cliff or above; it's the entrance to the Sickstone Caves that should draw the PCs' attention. Of course, Morbion knows better than to leave the entrance unwatched.

It's a DC 20 Climb check to reach the point where the waterfall emerges from the cliff face. A second DC 20 Climb check allows a character to clamber into the low-ceilinged passage just above the waterfall, after which it's a DC 20 Swim check to navigate the swiftly flowing waters upstream to area **3**. Of course, the tainted waters don't make for safe swimming (see area **3**).

Creatures: Apart from locals harvested from Verdinica, Morbion has gathered many new recruits to his cause from several goblin tribes that dwell in other caves in the region. Once infected, goblins make excellent guards for the cave entrance, and once they transform into slime creatures, they make excellent guards for the cave interior.

A dozen infected goblins armed with shortbows hide in the nooks and crannies of the cliff face around the cave entrance. They sleep in shifts, so at any one time six are awake and watching. If they see anyone approach who doesn't possess the limited empathic telepathy of the infected, the goblins wait until the intruders are within 60 feet before they begin shrieking and firing arrows. They are joined on the third round of combat by the other six infected goblins (once these six have a chance to wake up, grab their weapons, and move into position). The goblins enjoy cover from their position against attacks from the clearing.

Infected Goblins (12): AC 19 with cover; hp 5 each; Ranged shortbow +2 (1d4/×3); *Monster Manual* 133.

2. Cavern (EL 9)

Droplets of water dribble into a multitude of pools scattered throughout this cavern, and the place has a strange, almost bitter smell to it. A darkened tunnel continues north, into a strange passageway aglow with a nasty green-silver radiance.

The water leaching through the cliff to dribble into shallow pools here is tainted with sickstone. Although contact with the water causes a slight burning sensation, it's not enough to cause damage. The fumes from the water are pungent within the cave, though, and anyone in the cave must make a DC 13 Fortitude save each round to avoid becoming nauseated for 1 round. Creatures immune to poison are immune to this effect.

Creature: One of Morbion's greatest triumphs was the capture and infection of a gray render. This monster has since completely transformed into a slime creature, and serves as a guardian for this chamber. The lumbering beast won't rush out to aid the goblins in a fight in area **1**, but it does prepare an action to charge any non-infected creature that tries to enter the cave.

Large Slime Creature: hp 108; see Appendix.

3. River Cavern

The walls of this cavern are covered with sheets of mold and wet moss. A swiftly flowing river that disappears into a low gap in the southern wall blocks the route to the other side of the cavern. The water appears dark and foul, and where the cavern floor meets the river the rock is corroded and blackened.

Upstream, the river runs underground for some distance but leads nowhere important—to the south, it empties into a large pool at the base of the cliff in area **1**. The waters have been tainted by sickstone. Contact with the water exposes a creature to blinding sickness (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 292).

4. Yellow Doom (EL 6)

The tunnel here is dark and slippery, and takes a sharp downward angle ahead that seems treacherous indeed.

Anyone moving more than 10 feet into this tunnel must make a DC 12 Balance check to avoid falling prone from the slippery slope. Failure by 5 or more indicates the character slides all the way down to the bottom of this slope, which drops a total of 50 feet vertically. A falling character takes 3d6 points of damage from the partially controlled fall. Worse, the bottom of this slope is thickly infested with yellow mold that explodes into a cloud of poisonous spores as soon as anything lands in it. Those exposed must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage. Another DC 15 Fortitude save is required a minute later to avoid 2d6 points of Constitution damage. Yellow mold is detailed on page 76 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Treasure: The ancient remains of a human adventurer who perished here long ago remain entangled in the yellow mold. The skeleton's equipment is well preserved and consists of +2 *studded leather armor*, a heavy mithral shield, a +1 *longsword*, a *ring of sustenance*, *goggles of night*, and 205 gp.

5. Green Slime Trap (EL 7)

When Morbion first discovered the Sickstone Caves, several caverns and passageways were infested with green slime. Since this stuff is deadly to olive slime and slime creatures, he scoured the cave of most of it. He couldn't bring himself to destroy it all, though, since the stuff has such religious significance

to him. He instead gathered the last few patches and transplanted them into a covered pit in this hallway.

Trap: A false floor made of mud, branches, mold and light debris covers this pit. The false floor crumbles as soon as a weight in excess of 25 pounds is placed on it, dropping anyone standing on it into a 20-foot-deep pit. The pit floor is covered with green slime (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 76).

Green Slime Pit Trap: CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6, fall); green slime; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25.

Development: If the PCs learn about the violent reaction olive slime and slime creatures have with green slime, they may wish to harvest patches of green slime from this pit. Doing so requires a DC 12 Reflex save to avoid contact with the slime as it is loaded into a container (remember, green slime eats through wood and metal). There's enough green slime in here to harvest four doses, although innovative (or unscrupulous) PCs can certainly cultivate more.

6. Pot Pudding (EL 7)

The walls of this cavern appear warped and twisted, as if they had melted some time long ago. The floor is bowl-shaped, and contains what appears to be a bubbling pool of tar.

Creature: The "pool of tar" is in fact a black pudding. Although mindless, the black pudding perceives Morbion and the other slime creatures of the caves as allies. It doesn't like the sickstone, and its presence keeps the pudding effectively imprisoned here.

Black Pudding: hp 115; *Monster Manual* 201.

7. Rainbow Lake

A five-foot-wide natural stone bridge connects the southern and northern entrances into this cavern, crossing over a glowing pool of swirling green and magenta liquid. Several dark spires of rock protrude from the chaotic fluid like jagged teeth, and pungent vapors waft up from the liquid. The walls of the cave shimmer with that sickly green-silver light, but to the north the passageway glows a strangely-soothing shade of pink.

This cavern is besieged by two forms of ambient radiation—that emanated by the sickstone in the walls of the cave and that from the cindershard crystals in area **8** to the north. The pool of water below has become infused with this clashing radiation, and combined with the proximity of the shrine to Juiblix, is now a source of chaotic peril.

Anyone who breathes the air in this cave must make DC 17 Fortitude save to avoid falling under the effects of the chaotic vapor. Failure indicates the victim is *confused* for 1 round. Contact with the water incurs a –4 penalty on this save. A new save must be made each round to resist the effects of the stuff. The water quickly loses this quality if removed from the cave.

8. Crystal Deposits

The walls of this cavern are studded with an array of crystals jutting from the walls

at awkward angles. A few of these crystals glow with a vibrant pink light that is almost soothing in comparison to the silvery-green light of the earlier passages.

Treasure: The crystals here are mostly rose quartz, but those that glow are in fact cindershards (see sidebar on page 47). There are a total of 14 cindershards here—more form at the rate of one per month.

9. Upper Cave Access

The hole in this ceiling leads 70 feet up to area **11** in the upper caves. The sides of the shaft are quite slick, requiring a DC 30 Climb check to navigate.

Development: If the PCs make a lot of noise as they attempt to ascend this shaft, the slime creatures above take positions on either side of the shaft opening and prepare actions to attack anyone who comes in reach.

10. Shrine to Juiblex (EL 9)

Several sections of this cavern's walls glow with sickly silver-green radiance, with other sections slick with dripping slimy molds and ooze. The floor is a mire of ooze and slime, with thick, lazy runners of stuff slowly dripping from the ceiling. while the very walls appear to be weeping a dark green liquid that runs in rivulets down the rock. An altar of glowing green stone protrudes from the clots on the floor, with four fat black candles on each corner burning with lurid green flames.

This cavern has long been a holy site to the Faceless Lord—Morbion is merely the most recent to discover it. Who originally built the altar is a mystery Morbion has been unable to solve, yet the connection here between the Material Plane and Juiblex's Abyssal realm in the caverns of Shedaklah is unmistakable. Conjuration spells used to summon or call creatures from the Abyss function at two levels higher than the caster's normal caster level in this cave, and the entire place radiates overwhelming evil. Destroying the altar does little to change this condition. It would take powerful magic on the order of *miracle*, *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, or *wish* to sever this connection.

Creatures: This chamber is guarded by a half-dozen transformed goblins and villagers, all of whom have become slime creatures. The monsters form a defensive circle around the altar, and move immediately to attack any non-ooze or non-infected creature that dares enter this chamber.

Small Slime Creatures (3): hp 31 each; see Appendix.

Medium Slime Creatures (3): hp 57 each; see Appendix.

11. Shaft to the Lower Caves (EL 8)

A five-foot-wide hole in the floor here nearly fills the entire tunnel, leaving a one-foot-wide ledge to either side. A rolled-up rope ladder lies in a tangled heap nearby.

Creatures: Three slime creatures are stationed here; one to either side of the pit. Their job is to lower and raise the ladder for other slime creatures or for new victims brought here from elsewhere. If they notice anyone attempting to ascend up here from area **9** below, they prepare actions to attack the intruder as soon as he comes within reach.

Medium Slime Creatures (3): hp 57 each; see Appendix.

12. Cultivation Pits (EL 9)

Four pools of bubbling deep-green ooze mar the slippery stone floor of this cavern. A number of buckets containing chunks of rotting meat and plant matter sit around the edge of these pools, while a large stack of empty buckets lies next to the room's entrance.

Creatures: Morbion created these four pools of olive slime by using *stone shape* to create two-foot-deep hollow depressions in the floor. He then transplanted a batch of olive slime to each, and has been cultivating the four over the past several days in an attempt to breed variant forms of the ooze. So far, his experiments have met with failure, and he's only grown four patches of ordinary olive slime. The place is tended by a single slime creature that was once a troll; this slime creature methodically drops different buckets of meat or plants into the pools as directed by Morbion, but eagerly abandons this drudgery to attack anyone who enters the room.

Large Slime Creature: hp 108; see Appendix.

Olive Slime: hp 21; see Appendix.

13. Corrupted Elemental (EL 10)

The walls of this cave shimmer and waver with the nauseating silver-green stone. The large number of stalagmites and stalactites in this cave make it difficult to make out the exact shape and size of the chamber.

Creature: One of the rock formations in this cavern is actually a Huge earth elemental that stumbled upon this area on an endless journey through the crust of the world. It greatly enjoys the tingling sensations that sickstone has on its stony body, and has claimed this place as its home. Morbion has tried numerous times to befriend the elemental but has so far been unsuccessful—the elemental has no interest in the "drippy people" who live here. It has become horribly tainted by passing through a large quantity of sickstone. This creature now spends its time relaxing in this cavern. It's effectively taking 10 on its Hide check, so it's a mere DC 5 Spot check to notice it (accounting for a –2 penalty for distance when spotting it from the entrance to this cavern). It ignores any intruders until the moment they step into the cave, at which point it rears up to attack. It won't pursue people out of this cave if it isn't attacked itself, but once anyone inflicts any damage on the thing, it becomes enraged with indignation and stops at nothing in its pursuit for revenge against those who dared harm it in its home. Crafty PCs can use this trait to lure the sickstone elemental into a fight with slime creatures or even with Morbion—the elemental has difficulty telling non-elementals apart, and attacks a different random target within reach each round.

SICKSTONE ELEMENTAL **CR 10**

Elite earth elemental
N Huge elemental (earth)
Monster Manual 97
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +10
Aura sickstone radiation (40 ft., DC 25)
Languages Terran

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 19
hp 184 (16 HD); **DR** 5/—
Immune elemental traits
Fort +17, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

Spd 30 ft.
Melee 2 slams +21 (2d10+11 plus Con drain)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +31
Atk Options Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, earth mastery, push

Abilities Str 33, Dex 12, Con 24, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ earth glide
Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack
Skills Listen +11, Spot +10

Sickstone Radiation Aura (Su) A sickstone elemental exudes a foul radiation that illuminates everything in a 40-foot-spread. All creatures in this area must make a DC 25 Fortitude save each round they remain in the area or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage. A successful save reduces the Constitution damage to 1 point. This is a supernatural disease effect. A character who carries a cindershard crystal is immune to this effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Constitution Drain (Su) The sickstone elemental's slam attack is infused with radiation. Anyone who takes damage from this attack must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Constitution drain (a successful save reduces the Constitution drain to 1 point). This is a supernatural disease effect. A character who carries a cindershard crystal is immune to this effect, but each time the character is exposed to this effect he must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or all cindershards he carries become overloaded and crumble to powder, preventing the Constitution drain from that attack but not from subsequent slam attacks or the elemental's sickstone radiation aura. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Development: As long as the PCs don't enter the cavern, the sickstone elemental's attitude is indifferent—this changes to hostile once its territory is intruded upon. If able to communicate with the elemental, a character who befriends the creature can actually secure its aid. The elemental doesn't particularly like sharing these caves with the "drippy people," and if made helpful it agrees to aid the PCs in wiping out the slime creatures and Morbion.

14. Larder (CL 8)

Every surface in this cavern is covered with a slippery layer of soft green mold. A dozen large lumps on the walls vaguely resemble moldy cocoons, and the shapes within seem almost humanoid.

The twelve lumps may resemble cocoons, but in fact their function is more like a pantry. Each lump contains a single dead humanoid (seven contain goblins and five contain humans)—victims who didn't survive the journey to the Mother Cavern (area **16**). These bodies are stored here as food for Morbion, the slime creatures, and the pet black pudding in area **6**. The moss "cocoons" accelerate the rate of decomposition but then maintain the rot at the stage the slime creatures find to be the most delicious.

Creatures: The majority of the transformed goblin slime creatures can be found here, arrayed throughout the room awaiting orders from Morbion.

Small Slime Creatures (6): hp 31 each; see Appendix.

Trap: Morbion used *stone shape* spells to create a pit down to the river below, and then covered the pit with a thin layer of mud and branches and moss. Those who fall into the pit land in the tainted waters of the river and are quickly swept through area **3** and out into the pool to the west of area **1**.

Pit Trap: CR 6; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 70 ft. deep (2d3 nonlethal plus 3d6 lethal, fall into water); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

15. Compost Cavern (CL 9)

Fibrous tendrils of pallid fungus snake down from the ceiling of this cave to form a tangled forest of bitter-smelling wretchedness. Diseased-looking mushrooms grow from the thick, spongy ground, with several particularly large specimens growing from a large mound of decaying matter in the cave's center. The mound of compost has a disturbing shallow on one side—a concavity that looks almost like a nest...

This filthy chamber serves Morbion as a bedroom and a personal place of worship to the Faceless Lord, although he rarely uses the place since he spends most of his time in the Mother Chamber these days.

Characters who search through the room or the compost heap expose themselves to a foul disease known as greenblight. This disease causes great green rashes and open sores that reek of compost to appear on the victim's body. Greenblight is spread by contact with tainted plants or victims of the disease. A DC 20 Fortitude save resists the disease's effects. It has an incubation period of 1 day, and inflicts 1d8 points of Strength damage each day the disease progresses. A victim drained to 0 Strength remains horribly aware of his situation, but cannot move and quickly takes root in any available soil. This mound of writhing, wet plant matter can survive for months if exposed regularly to sunlight and a moist environment. The plant matter remains contagious until it dies.

A narrow crack in the eastern wall of this chamber opens into area **16**. Only two inches wide at its widest point, the crack is overgrown with slimy fungus and requires a DC 25 Search check to locate.

Creatures: This chamber is guarded by a dangerous manifestation of the Faceless Lord's will, given demonic life by the pool in the Mother Chamber. This creature is a living combination of *chaos hammer* and *unholy blight*. Known as a chaos blight, this dangerous ooze appears as a cloying miasma of greasy darkness shot through with a storm of multicolored ricocheting energy. The chaos blight rolls up over the compost

heap to assault any intruders, pursuing them until the PCs flee into an area of sickstone illumination—the chaos blight does not enter these areas.

Chaos Blight **CR 9**

Living spell (*chaos hammer* and *unholy blight*)
CE Large ooze
Monster Manual III 91
Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 13
hp 52 (7 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Immune ooze traits
SR 17
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Spd 40 ft.
Melee slam +6 (1d6+3 plus *chaos hammer* and *unholy blight*)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +11
Special Atk engulf

Abilities Str 14, Dex 11, Con 14, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 14

Spell Effect (Su) A creature hit by a chaos blight's slam attack is subjected to *chaos hammer* and *unholy blight*, both at caster level 7th. The save DC for both spell effects is DC 16. This save DC is Charisma-based.

Engulf (Ex) A chaos blight can flow around creatures that fit within its space as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the chaos blight, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must make a DC 16 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success , they are pushed aside or back (opponent's choice) as the spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the full normal effect of *chaos hammer* and *unholy blight* (caster level 7th) each round on the chaos blight's turn, and are considered to be grappled. The save DC is Charisma-based.

16. The Mother Chamber (EL 10)

This spacious cavern is illuminated by seven strangely-carved braziers arrayed in a ten-foot-diameter circle in the center of the room. The braziers' sickly green stone is carved in the shape of writhing amorphous tendrils reaching up to support corroded iron bowls in which sputter foul-smelling flames. Thick sheets of dripping algae and slime coat the walls and floor, and half-congealed ropes of the same hang from the ceiling like jungle vines. All of this stuff slithers, writhes, and slides about the place, almost as if it were alive.

This is the Mother Chamber, the second location in the Sickstone Caves that has been touched by Juiblex and exists on a thin spot on the border between the Material Plane and the Abyss. Whereas the other such location (the shrine in area 10) is a more spiritual connection,

the Mother Chamber is a more physical connection. The ooze and slime in this cavern cannot normally thrive on the Material Plane—only the proximity of the pool in this cavern allows the blasphemous matter to exist here at all.

The semi-living ooze that coats the ceiling, walls, and floor of this chamber actively resists the intrusion of non-oozes; Morbion is close enough to an ooze that his presence is tolerated. Any other creature type treats the ooze as difficult terrain. Furthermore, the stuff is incredibly slippery for non-oozes to walk on. In order to walk on the slime, a character must make a DC 15 Balance check, with a failure of 5 or more indicating a fall.

As with area **10**, conjuration spells used to summon or call creatures from the Abyss function at two levels higher than the caster's normal caster level, and the entire place radiates overwhelming evil.

The braziers in the center of the room burn the same strange incense used in the shrine of Juiblex below the temple of Saint Cuthbert in Verdinica. The incense incurs a –2 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and Will saving throws for 1 hour unless a DC 15 Fortitude save is made—the slime creatures and Morbion are immune to the effects of the incense.

Creatures: Although it isn't obvious, the circle of braziers in the center of the room marks the perimeter of a ten-foot-wide pool of olive slime. The edge of this pool blends seamlessly with the surrounding slime. A DC 20 Spot check notices the rippling surface of the ooze in time. The pool itself is only a foot deep, and actually consists of four separate olive slimes growing in adjacent squares. A creature that walks into the pool of olive slime immediately provokes an attack of opportunity from the ooze whose square he enters and must make a DC 15 Balance check to avoid falling prone.

The fallen cleric of Obad-Hai Morbion is most likely encountered here. He is attended by two Medium slime creatures (one of which was once the herbalist Agatha from Verdinica). In the highly unlikely event that the PCs penetrate this far without alerting the slime creatures and Morbion, they find the cleric meditating before the pool of olive slime. If he knows the PCs are nearing the Mother Chamber, he prepares for battle as detailed in Tactics.

MORBION **CR 9**

Male human cleric 5/oozemaster 4 (Juiblex)
CE Medium humanoid
Masters of the Wild 67
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Undercommon

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 58 (9 HD)
Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10

Spd 20 ft.
Melee *+1 quarterstaff* +7/+1 (1d6+1) or
minor oozy touch +6 touch (1d4 plus 1d4+4 acid) or
minor oozy touch +6 touch (1d6+4 nonlethal cold)
Ranged oozy glob +7 touch (1d4 plus 1d4+4 acid) or
oozy glob +7 touch (1d6+4 nonlethal cold)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +6
Special Atk rebuke undead 1/day (–2; 2d6+3)
Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (32 charges), *potion of bear's endurance, potion of lesser restoration, potion of shield of faith +3*
Spells Prepared (CL 7th; CL 8th for chaos spells)
4th—*chaos hammer*[DC] (DC 17), *summon monster IV*
3rd—*cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle against law*[DC], *summon monster III*
2nd—*cure moderate wounds, darkness, hold person* (DC 15), *shatter*[D] (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)
1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor, protection from law*[DC], *sanctuary*
0—*create water, cure minor wounds* (3), *guidance, mending*
D domain spell; **C** chaos spell; **Domains** Chaos, Destruction

Abilities Str 10, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 6
SQ malleability, slithery face, spontaneous casting (inflict spells)
Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (dungeoneering)
Skills Concentration +10, Craft (alchemy) +9, Craft (trapmaking) +9, Disguise +2, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Survival +11 (+13 underground), Swim +4
Possessions *+1 hide armor, +1 quarterstaff, cloak of resistance +2, periapt of health, boots of levitation*

Malleability (Su) Morbion can compress his body and gear enough to squeeze through an inch-wide crack.
Minor Oozy Touch (Su) As a full attack action, Morbion can transform his hand into an ochre jelly pseudopod. If he hits, he inflicts 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d4+4 points of acid damage (although this acid only affects flesh). Alternately, he can generate brown mold spores; if he hits with this touch attack, he inflicts 1d6+4 points of nonlethal cold damage. Morbion is immune to the effects of ochre jellies and brown mold.
Oozy Glob (Su) Morbion can hurl a glob of ochre jelly or brown mold as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet. This attack is treated as a grenaidelike weapon. A direct hit deals damage as noted. All creatures within 5 feet suffer 1 point of the appropriate type of splash damage (acid or nonlethal cold). He can use this attack twice a day.
Slithery Face (Su) Morbion can manipulate his facial features, gaining a +4 competence bonus on Disguise checks.

Medium Slime Creatures (2): hp 57 each; see Appendix.

Olive Slimes (4): hp 21; see Appendix.

Tactics: If Morbion knows the PCs are coming, he casts *magic circle against law* on himself and prepares an action to cast *sound burst* on the opening soon as he sees an intruder. Since the slime creatures are immune to sonic damage and stunning, Morbion doesn't worry about catching the slime creatures in the area of effect. Morbion does not abandon this chamber, and fights to the end.

Concluding the Adventure

When this adventure begins, Morbion and his cult of slime worshipers are on the cusp of leading an army of slime creatures on an assault against the thorp of Verdinica. If the PCs don't defeat the oozemaster within a few days, he does just this, infecting all remaining locals

and establishing a formidable army of slime creatures.

Hopefully the PCs stop him before he gets this far. Of the infected locals, only Codius and his acolytes are beyond redemption—all other infected villagers can be saved with *remove disease*. At this point, resolving whatever issue it was that brought them to the thorp in the first place (missing taxes, heretical teachings, etc.) should be easy.

The locals have little to offer as a reward for the party's aid in defeating Morbion apart from their gratitude. Mayor Lethryn finally emerges from his home to public ridicule; he tries to buy the PCs' gratitude by offering them the 350 gp he's skimmed from the town's taxes, but even if the PCs accept this he's driven out of Verdinica by the scorn of his neighbors. In his absence, the locals end up nominating Dreygan as their new mayor—or they could turn to one of the PCs for leadership.

And there still may be the matter of olive slime. The stuff is fecund; and certainly at least one or two slime creatures have wandered off into the woods and died, leaving behind dangerous deposits of slime in the woodland. If ignored, the slime can quickly spread as it infects local wildlife, and the PCs may find themselves called back to the region by a desperate thorp to defend them against a new and even larger army of shapeless menace.

Appendix: New Monsters

Olive Slime

The swath of glistening, dirty green sludge shivers an instant before a writhing tangle of hair-like filaments extrudes from its surface. The tendrils snap and whip in the air, seeking the touch of nearby flesh with unnerving accuracy and obvious hunger.

Olive Slime **CR 4**

N Small ooze

Init –5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen –5, Spot –5

AC 6 touch 6, flat-footed 6 (+1 size, –5 Dex)

hp 21 (2 HD)

Immune critical hits, disease, electricity, flanking, sonic, magic, mind-affecting, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning, weapon damage

Fort +5, **Ref** –5, **Will** –5

Weakness green slime

Spd 0 ft.

Melee tendril –1 touch (poison)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** –6

Special Atk transformation

Abilities Str 4, Dex 1, Con 20, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

SQ immune to magic, immune to weapons, ooze traits

Environment underground

Organization solitary or swath (2–20)

Treasure none

Advancement —

Immune to Magic (Ex): An olive slime is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance, with the exception of *remove disease*, *heal*, or any other effect that cures disease. These spells immediately destroy the olive slime if it fails a Fortitude saving throw against the spell's DC.

Immune to Weapons (Ex): Bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing weapons deal no damage to an olive slime.

Poison (Ex): A creature touched by an olive slime's tendril attack must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Dexterity damage—the initial and secondary damage is the same. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Transformation (Su): Any creature that takes Dexterity damage from an olive slime becomes infected with the slime's insidious taint. This effect is similar to a disease, and cannot harm creatures immune to disease. Any effect that removes disease cures an infested victim. Left to run its course, olive slime infestation quickly spreads through the victim's body. Patches of skin (particularly along the backbone) take on an olive hue and sweat profusely. This process takes an hour, at the end of which the victim must make a DC 16 Fortitude save. Success

indicates recovery over the next few hours. Failure indicates that the olive slime's taint has reached the brain, and the victim's mind undergoes a sinister transformation. His alignment changes to neutral. He also is beset upon by a terrible hunger, and each hour he doesn't eat any food he is treated as if fatigued. The victim gains a crude form of telepathy that allows transmission of emotions only with other infected victims. Each day this infection continues, the victim must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Intelligence drain. When the victim's Intelligence reaches 3, the drain ceases and he transforms into a slime creature of the appropriate size. Creatures with less than 4 Intelligence must make a DC 16 Fortitude save each day to resist transforming into a slime creature. Tiny or smaller creatures do not become slime creatures—they instead transform into a Small patch of olive slime. Once the transformation to slime creature is complete, the original creature is effectively dead. He can be restored to life normally by any effect that does not require an intact body. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Vulnerable to Green Slime (Ex): Green slime and olive slime react violently if put in contact with each other, creating a foul-smelling (but harmless) blast of pale green mist as the two slimes quickly dissolve away to nothingness.

Olive slime is a strain of monstrous plant life akin in some ways to green slime, but contact with it is worse in most respects. Olive slime favors moist, subterranean areas, often those where sickstone is present—frequently, a patch of olive slime floats on water like algae. Some scholars theorize that olive slime is a species of green slime that has been transformed by exposure to sickstone, while others claim its origins are Abyssal, that it's a dangerous ooze-like plant from Juiblex's realm.

Large pools of olive slime actually consist of multiple deposits of the stuff—the ooze itself has no capacity to advance in power. In a way, slime creatures represent the "advanced" form of olive slime.

Olive slime cannot move, nor is it intelligent. In many ways it straddles the hazy line between creature and hazard. Its primary offense and defense is the capability to create slime creatures for protection and to spread its wretchedness to new areas. A patch of olive slime lashes out at any creature that comes within reach of its tendrils.

Slime Creature

A shapeless clot of dark green ooze suddenly rears up, taking the terrible, melted form of what could almost be a man. Its reeking body drips and runs, constantly reforming and piling back up on itself in a sluicing display of constant rebirth.

SMALL SLIME CREATURE **CR 3**

N Small ooze

Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Language telepathy with slime creatures 200 ft.

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11 (+1 size)

hp 31 (3 HD); **DR** 5/—

Immune critical hits, disease, electricity, flanking, sonic, magic, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning

Fort +8, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Weakness green slime

Spd 20 ft., swim 10 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d4+1 plus poison [DC 16])

Base Atk +2; **Grp** –1

Special Atk transformation (DC 16)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ ooze traits

Feats Great Fortitude, Stealth

Skills Hide +9, Move Silently +5, Swim +9

Environment any (near olive slime)

Organization solitary, pair, or cult (3–20)

Treasure none

Advancement 4 HD (Small)

MEDIUM SLIME CREATURE **CR 5**

N Medium ooze

Init –1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Language telepathy with slime creatures 200 ft.

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (–1 Dex)
hp 57 (5 HD); **DR** 5/—
Immune critical hits, disease, electricity, flanking, sonic, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning
Fort +9, **Ref** +0, **Will** +1
Weakness green slime

Spd 20 ft., swim 10 ft.
Melee 2 slams +6 (1d6+3 plus poison [DC 18])
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Special Atk transformation (DC 18)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 8, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1
SQ ooze traits
Feats Great Fortitude, Stealth
Skills Hide +5, Move Silently +5, Swim +11

Environment any (near olive slime)
Organization solitary, pair, or cult (3–20)
Treasure none
Advancement 6–7 HD (Medium)

LARGE SLIME CREATURE **CR 9**

N Large ooze
Init –2; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Language telepathy with slime creatures 200 ft.

AC 7, touch 7, flat-footed 7 (–1 size, –2 Dex)
hp 108 (8 HD); **DR** 5/—
Immune critical hits, disease, electricity, flanking, sonic, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning
Fort +12, **Ref** +0, **Will** +2
Weakness green slime

Spd 20 ft., swim 10 ft.
Melee* 3 slams +9 (1d8+10 plus poison [DC 22])
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Special Atk transformation (DC 22)
*Includes adjustment for 3-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 24, Dex 6, Con 26, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1
SQ ooze traits
Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Stealth
Skills Hide +1, Move Silently +6, Swim +15

Environment any (near olive slime)
Organization solitary, pair, or cult (3–20)
Treasure none
Advancement 9–14 HD (Large), 15–25 HD (Huge), 26–39 HD (Gargantuan), 40+ HD (Colossal)

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC varies (indicated in stat blocks above), initial and secondary damage 1d4 Dexterity. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Transformation (Ex): Any creature that suffers Dexterity damage from a slime creature is exposed to olive slime.

Vulnerable to Green Slime (Ex): Green slime and slime creatures react violently if they contact each other. The green slime is destroyed, and the slime creature takes 6d6 points of damage.

A slime creature is the transformed victim of olive slime. These hapless creatures bear a rudimentary resemblance to their original forms, yet their bodies are composed almost entirely of thick olive ooze. A recently created slime creature usually retains portions of the original creature's skeleton lodged in its body, but over time, the slime creature sheds even these remnants until its body is composed wholly of ooze.

Slime creatures possess a crude form of intelligence—barely enough to understand a few spoken words, speaking in low, gurgling voices. They can communicate with other slime creatures via telepathy, and do so to organize cunning defenses against those who seek to destroy them or the olive slimes that grow in their lairs.

A slime creature attacks with slams, using pseudopods of ooze to smash at its victims. Groups of slime creatures use simple tactics (such as flanking) to increase their chances, focusing their attacks against a single foe at a time. Some slime creatures have even shown enough ingenuity to create ambushes or simple traps.

A slime creature advances by gaining Hit Dice. Each time a slime creature increases a size category, it gains an additional slam attack—they otherwise follow the rules for advancing creatures as detailed in the *Monster Manual*.

In exceptionally rare cases, a slime creature that was once a worshiper of Juiblex might retain fragments of intelligence—not enough to retain its old abilities, but perhaps enough for it to become a cleric of the Faceless Lord.

Campbell writes, "I am a 25-year-old lawyer from Auckland, New Zealand who has been gaming in various forms since I was about 5 years old. I would like to dedicate this adventure both to my gaming group and to my fiancée, Kamla (who I proposed to just yesterday)."

Scaling the Adventure

"Caverns of the Ooze Lord" is designed for a group of four 8th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 6th–7th-level characters or 9th–10th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average level of your group deviates from 11. Don't forget to modify the amount of treasure found in the adventure appropriately. Specific changes to the adventure include:

6th–7th-level characters: The infected don't join the fight if the tendriculos escapes, waiting instead to attack the party after they kill it. Reduce the lethality of the sickstone by lowering its Fortitude save DC to 12, and have it deal 2 points of Constitution damage on a failed save and no damage on a successful save. Replace all Large slime creatures with Medium slime creatures. Replace the black pudding in area **6** with an ochre jelly. Remove the Medium slime creatures from area **10**, and replace the Large slime creature in area **12** with a Medium slime creature. Make the elemental in area **13** a normal Huge earth elemental. Remove two of the slime creatures from area **14**. Replace the chaos blight with a black pudding. Remove the slime creatures from area **16**.

9th–10th-level characters: Advance the tendriculos by 4–7 Hit Dice. Add two Medium slime creatures to area **2**. Advance the black pudding in area **6** by 4 Hit Dice, or give it the fiendish creature template. Reduce the amount of cindershards in the adventure to one per party member. Add a Large slime creature to area **10**, and advance the Large slime creature in area **12** by 3–6 Hit Dice. Add two Medium slime creatures to area **14**. Add a second chaos blight to area **15**. Add a Large slime creature and 1–3 Small slime creatures to area **16**.

AGE OF WORMS

THE LIBRARY OF LAST RESORT

The Order of the Storm once stood proud as a mighty enclave of druidic power, yet today their deeds and works are forgotten. Their only legacy is a swirling maelstrom of unthinkable power, a great storm that roils far from the shore over the Lake of Unknown Depths. A hell of rending winds, earth-shattering thunder, and scorching arcs of flesh-sizzling lightning, the tempest conceals within its swirling purple-black clouds a single mysterious island. The answer to a thousand mysteries as old as the world can be found in a hidden fountain on this island, contained in the waters of the *Fountain of Dreams*. It is here that knowledge of the location of Dragotha's stolen phylactery resides, and the PCs aren't the only ones who seek it.

"The Library of Last Resort" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 16th-level characters. It is also the ninth installment of the Age of Worms Adventure Path, a complete campaign consisting of 12 adventures, several "Backdrop" articles to help Dungeon Masters run the series, and a handful of poster maps of key locations. Your PCs should advance to 17th level at some point during this adventure, and by the end should reach 18th level. For additional aid in running this campaign, check out *DRAGON*'s monthly "Wormfood" articles, a series that provides additional material to help players survive the campaign. "The Library of Last Resort" is the first (and only) adventure in the Age of Worms to heavily feature wilderness exploration. High-level characters have a staggering array of options at their fingertips for exploration and travel, and issue #341 of *DRAGON* outlines several of these.

BY NICOLAS LOGUE
BY JOACHIM BARRUM, STEVE PRESCOTT, AND EVA WIDERMANN
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI
AGE OF WORMS CALLIGRAPHY BY DARLENE
ADVENTURE PATH, HIGH LEVEL (13TH–20TH), WILDERNESS

Of course, you can also run "The Library of Last Resort" as a stand-alone adventure, or even as part of a campaign of your own design.

Adventure Background

Long ago, an ancient sect of druids called the Order of the Storm defeated Kyuss and his undead legions, forcing him to retreat to his nighted prison and averting the Age of Worms in their time. Yet this battle was not without cost to the Order. The druids waged a bitter war against the Wormgod's writhing spawn, who were led in battle by the demigod's most dreadful minion, the dracolich Dragotha. The undead dragon culled most of the Order of the Storm's elders in combat, until finally (through guile, and at no meager cost) a selfless band of druids stole Dragotha's phylactery from his lair while the dracolich was leading Kyuss' interests elsewhere. The druids fled with their prize to a fortress nestled in the Rift Canyon. There, the Order secured the phylactery in a special vault to forever keep it from Dragotha and his minions.

Dragotha sensed the loss of his phylactery the instant it was sealed into this vault. Spurred by his sense of self-preservation, Dragotha abandoned Kyuss' army and fled the field, taking a significant group of his forces with him to seek those responsible and reclaim his essence before they destroyed it. The loss of Dragotha's leadership and his forces crippled Kyuss' army, and the Wormgod was forced to retreat.

The Order of the Storm did not long survive their victory over Kyuss. The demigod's cult proved even more dangerous after their god's defeat. These desperate remnants hunted the druids at every turn, murdering them one at a time until the few remaining elders were forced to flee to the isolated island of Tilagos in the Lake of Unknown Depths. There, far from the enemy's grasp, the last members of the Order of the Storm worked their final magic to forever preserve their lore. They created the *Fountain of Dreams*, and within its waters they placed the entirety of their order's history, knowledge, memories, and even their fears. To ensure that only like-minded creatures could access their legacy, the druids sacrificed themselves in a potent rite. The Order of the Storm set the island's interior apart from the world, and in so doing they were transformed into fey guardians of great power.

The location of Dragotha's phylactery is but one of countless secrets infused in the waters of the *Fountain of Dreams*. Tilagos Island has drawn the attention of thousands of explorers, loremasters and seekers of arcane power in the past, but the *Fountain of Dreams* remained undiscovered. Many claim the legend of the druids' "magic fountain" is no more than the cruel joke of some long dead historian.

Darl Quethos, Hand of the Lich-Lord, believes otherwise. A powerful cleric of Vecna, Darl even now nears landfall on the mysterious island. If he can only find the *Fountain of Dreams*, he knows that a vast array of forgotten secrets would become his own, and by extension, his god's. Darl is already much favored by Vecna, and is the current wielder of the infamous *Hand of Vecna*. He hopes that by recovering the secrets of the Order of the Storm, Vecna will reveal to him the only secret that matters: the location of the *Eye of Vecna*.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins as the PCs meet the mysterious Lashonna in her Alhaster manor house. When asked what she knows about the Age of Worms and the wizard Balakarde (who went missing years ago in search of the secrets of Kyuss), she offers pages from Balakarde's journal and reveals that Kyuss' chief agent on the Material Plane is an undead dragon named Dragotha. Destruction of this dracolich may be the only way to prevent the Age of Worms, since without his general, Kyuss' armies and cults would quickly disband. In order to destroy Dragotha, Lashonna explains, the PCs must first recover his phylactery, and to do that, they'll need to find out where it has been hidden, since it was stolen away from the dracolich hundreds of years ago. Although the last of the ancient druids responsible for this feat have long since died off, legend holds that they hid their knowledge in the Library of Last Resort.

Lashonna reveals that this repository of knowledge is hidden somewhere on Tilagos Island, the final redoubt of these druids. The PCs travel to this mysterious island, where they discover a strange ruin. The maze hides the entrance to the island's interior, which resides in a remote demiplane known to the druids as Last Resort. Not long after, they are confronted by the wardens of Tilagos, powerful fey known as wild watchers. To impress the watchers and gain access to the Library of Last Resort, the party must best a cursed titan, survive an encounter with an elder nightmare beast, breach the depths of Doomshroud Forest, and retrieve a feather from a living roc. Only then can the PCs gain access to the Library's knowledge.

The "library" is in fact an artifact called the *Fountain of Dreams*. By drinking from the fountain, the PCs experience a vivid vision wherein they take part in a key battle 15 centuries past, defending an ancient vault from an assault of Dragotha's undead. When they emerge from the vision, the PCs realize this is where Dragotha's phylactery was hidden, but unfortunately for them, the *Fountain of Dreams* has vanished and the secret knowledge it contained has been returned to the world. What the PCs know now, Dragotha will soon learn, so they must hasten to claim his phylactery before he can reclaim it for himself.

Adventure Hooks

At the end of the previous adventure, "The Prince of Redhand," the PCs manage to finally meet Lashonna. The enigmatic woman revealed to them that she knew much of Balakarde and the Age of Worms, and invited them to visit her at Mistwall Manor in the city of Alhaster at their earliest convenience. You can set the date of this visit as you wish, perhaps allowing the PCs some down time to craft magic items, research spells, or continue to explore the City of Scoundrels (detailed in DUNGEON #131's backdrop, "Alhaster"). When the PCs decide to meet with Lashonna, begin with Part One.

If you wish to run "Library of Last Resort" independently from the Age of

We Don't Work For Vampires!

It's possible, if the PCs learn about Lashonna's true nature, that they'll refuse to meet with her. They may even hatch plans to sneak into her manor and try to kill her. If they decide to do this, all is not lost. Lashonna is an incredibly intelligent foe, and if she realizes that the PCs would rather track her down and kill her, she figures that they might just as easily be tempted to do the same to Dragotha.

If the PCs make public their intention to attack Lashonna before they encounter her, she quickly learns of their plans via one of her numerous agents in town. Rather than confront them, she abandons her manor (after relocating anything of real value) and leaves behind a number of undead minions to provide a token resistance against the PCs. She makes sure to leave behind documents that reveal Dragotha is the leader of Kyuss' forces, and that in order to destroy him someone would need to first destroy his phylactery. She also indicates in the documents that the location of his phylactery is unknown, and that Tilagos Island holds the key. By leaving these clues, she hopes the PCs end up seeking out Dragotha's doom anyway.

If, on the other hand, the PCs wait until they meet her to attack (possibly because during their discussion with her they discover her true nature via *true seeing* or a similar effect) and she is unable to talk them out of attacking her by trying to convince them that Dragotha is the greater danger, she tries to charm or dominate the party into doing her bidding. As a very old vampiric silver dragon, Lashonna is a CR 23 monster—she should have little problem defeating a party of 16th-level characters. Note that she doesn't try to kill off the entire party; she can still use them if she manages to defeat them without resorting to killing. If things look dire, she teleports to safety; even if she's reduced to 0 hit points, she can likely escape to her hoard and recover. In the meantime, she hopes the "victorious" PCs discover the documents in her manor that point the way to Tilagos Island.

It's unlikely, but possible, that Lashonna can be destroyed by the PCs. In this case, you'll need to adjust several encounters in the final Age of Worms adventure, "Dawn of a New Age," but having the PCs discover her documents about Dragotha, his phylactery, and Tilagos Island can put the campaign back on track.

Lashonna's statistics appear in issue #135 of DUNGEON; if you need to generate her statistics before then, consult pages 196–197 of the *Draconomicon* for rules on creating vampiric dragons.

Worms, you can use one of the following hooks to send your PCs to Tilagos Island.

- **The Answers You Seek**: The *Fountain* could serve as the solution to any great conundrum in your own personal campaign. The identity of a hidden mastermind, the genesis (and solution to) a centuries-long feud, or the location of a holy relic may only be attainable from the *Fountain of Dreams*. Alternately, the *Fountain* could hold the key to any mysteries in the PCs' backgrounds or family history. You need only alter Chapter Four of the adventure, creating a different final vision to better suit the situation in your campaign.
- **Dangerous Curiosity**: Someone the PCs know has traveled to Tilagos Island to uncover the secrets of the druids' power. Unfortunately, this friend isn't up to the task of surviving the terrors of the island, and the party must rush off in pursuit to save his hide.

PART ONE—THE SILVER SORCERESS

Lashonna's manor is the largest estate (not counting Zeech's palace itself) in Alhaster. Lashonna is in truth a very old vampiric silver dragon, and has been a key architect in the current condition of the town of Alhaster. Her advice to Prince Zeech (who values her as a trusted friend and adviser, but to his undying frustration never anything more than that) is the primary cause of the city's current troubles. Lashonna is also one of Kyuss' greatest minions, second only to Dragotha, and she has worked for the last 20 years to ensure that everything is right in Alhaster to usher in the Worm-god's return. Most of this information remains hidden from the PCs, although use of powerful divination magic like *commune* can reveal some of these secrets. If the PCs take these steps to investigate Lashonna's background, don't play coy. Reward them for their insight and use of powerful magic and feel free to reveal to them the truth of Lashonna's nature, although you should try to keep hidden her actual allegiance and devotion to Kyuss for now, if you can.

Lashonna asks the PCs to visit her at midnight, saying mysteriously that what she has to tell the PCs is not something the sunlit world wants to hear. The silver-haired sorceress arranges for the PCs to be picked up at any location in Alhaster and driven to her estate by her carriage and driver—a tall, gaunt half-orc named **Kelgorn** (LE male half-orc expert 2) who walks with a limp. He regards his lady's midnight visitors with a disapproving gaze, but says nothing to them. A DC 25 Sense Motive check is enough to notice that Kelgorn is charmed. This effect is, of course, one of Lashonna's methods of ensuring the loyalty of the help. The *charm monster* effect on Kelgorn functions at caster level 18th, but even if it is dispelled, Kelgorn remains loyal to Lashonna—fear is a powerful motivator. He actually knows little about Lashonna if the PCs get him to talk by making him friendly (his initial attitude is unfriendly, even if the charm is removed), but he does know she's a powerful spellcaster and not someone to be trifled with.

As the PCs arrive at Mistwall Manor, they are escorted through a luxurious courtyard of fountains and topiaries, into the front parlor, and are then led up a spiraling marble staircase to Lashonna's private study and reading room. As the PCs enter this luxurious chamber, read them the following:

The walls of this spacious, tastefully decorated study are filled with shelves of leather-bound tomes on a wide variety of topics. A large desk sits against the far wall, its surface empty save for a stack of tattered pieces of yellowed paper. The carpet is a deep shade of crimson, and arrayed on it in a semicircle

before the desk are several high-backed chairs fitted with velvet cushions.

Lashonna waits here for the PCs, wrapped in a gold-trimmed gown of the very latest fashion and cut to accentuate her near-perfect figure. As the PCs enter, a delighted smile dances upon her scarlet lips before she dismisses her manservant. "You won't be needed any longer Kelgorn, I'm sure I'll be quite well attended to, with such pleasing guests to keep me company. Good night." The half-orc withdraws with a stiff bow as Lashonna gestures to the chairs before her desk.

Once the PCs are settled, Lashonna apologizes again for the late hour but assures them that what she has to tell them will make the loss of their beauty sleep worthwhile. She indicates the tattered pages on the table, inferring that one of the PCs should take them as she says, "Balakarde's journal, or what's left of it, in any event. You'll see he's quite mad. Obsessed, the poor dear, and with worms no less. Tiresome. But please, look it over, and then we can talk."

Give the PCs a chance to look over the fragments of Balakarde's journal (reproduced as a handout). Once the PCs have digested the journal, Lashonna politely entertains their questions. To throw off paranoia and suspicion, she may feign a strong attraction to one of the characters. If Lashonna is complimented on her dress, she gushes: "I like to keep up with all the latest trends." If anyone comments on her impressive collection of tomes, she is flattered: "I believe one should stay in tune with the past. It often helps us prepare for the future."

Lashonna's goal at this meeting is to convince the PCs that they need to stop Dragotha. She chooses her words carefully when she summarizes what she believes must be done to prevent the Age of Worms.

"It seems obvious that Dragotha intends to release Kyuss from his prison, and in so doing, usher in the Age of Worms. The solution seems obvious. A king without his commander is powerless. It's taken Dragotha nearly 1,500 years to reach this point. Remove him now, and it will certainly be centuries before anything has a chance to release the Wormgod again.

"Of course, one cannot simply waltz into a lich's lair, kill him, and be done with it. Dragotha may not know where his phylactery is, but that doesn't mean it's useless to him. Destroying him before you destroy his phylactery is as good as finding it and handing it over to him.

"So your first order of business should be to find his phylactery and destroy it. And that's where it gets complicated. I have no idea where it may be hidden. Obviously, neither does Dragotha, and that's a good thing. Certainly, his doubt to its location is the main reason he hasn't tried to simply destroy himself as a desperate way to discover its location.

"Balakarde left for the Wormcrawl Fissure, against my advice, intending to learn more about Dragotha. He never returned, but at least he had the foresight to leave his journal fragments with me. His journal and his disappearance have become something of a minor obsession of mine, I must confess. I've spent the last sixteen years, on and off, studying the lore of Kyuss, of Dragotha, and associated matters. And while I haven't managed to determine where Dragotha's phylactery is hidden, I do believe I know where that information might be found.

"As Balakarde mentions in his journal, the Age of Worms and Kyuss' resurrection were stopped fifteen centuries ago by the Order of the Storm. Historians believe that the Order died out not long after this victory, hunted down and destroyed by the last surviving members of the cult of Kyuss. These records are incorrect. The Order instead retreated to their stronghold on a remote island in the Nyr Dyv called Tilagos.

"On this island there is a library of sorts, a repository of the Order's lore. It has been sought for centuries by wizards, scholars, and explorers, for it is said to be filled with hundreds of years of history, memories, dreams, and of course secrets. Secrets are so valuable aren't they, my darlings? Seems the longer they are kept, the more they're worth. If a written account of the secret of what happened to Dragotha's phylactery exists, it must certainly be there.

Lashonna

"Of course, there are complications—there always are, right? Before they built this library, the Order of the Storm drove a lasting bargain with primal elemental forces. They sacrificed their lives to whisk the island's interior off the Material Plane. In its place is a barren rock surrounded by an ever-raging storm of such intensity that ships that approach within ten miles are invariably lost. The island itself appears on no maps, but the stories hint that the druids left a way for those in need to reach their secrets while at the same time warding the place away from the prying eyes of Kyuss' undead fanatics.

"Worse, I'm afraid others have learned this as well, in part as an unfortunate result of my own research. I have a fair amount of competition in the arena of gathering and keeping secrets, and invariably word gets out that I've made a discovery. My enemies are always quick to nip at my heals. I speak, in particular, of a simpering dog of a man named Heskin who once served me. I'm afraid Heskin has been wooed from my

side with promises of wealth and power, and has taken word of this discovery to a disreputable man indeed, a powerful priest of Vecna named Darl Quethos."

With this, Lashonna asks the PCs if they'd like to have a peek at Heskin and his new friends, producing a small lock of hair tied with a gold wire on a fine gold chain—she explains she "procured" this bit of hair from Heskin's barber, and hints that she's collected similar bits from all her competitors to aid in keeping up with their current plans. Assuming the characters are interested, she produces a scroll of *greater scrying* from her desk.

Heskin gets a DC 20 Will save to resist, although since Lashonna has a lock of his hair, he suffers a –10 penalty on his save, giving him a total Will save of –3, so chances are good the scrying attempt will be successful. If she successfully scries on Heskin, read the PCs the following.

A tumultuous scene fades into view in the middle of the room for all to observe, along with the howling sound of an oceanic tempest. The image clears to show a deathly pale man lashed to a ship's mast with several coils of rope. Although details beyond a ten-foot-radius around Heskin are hazy and unclear, it's obvious that the ship is caught in a tremendous storm—the decks are awash in foamy water as both waves and driving sheets of rain torment the terrified man. Sounds of gruff sailors shouting commands and curses in Orc can be heard under the raging tumult of the storm, and now and then, frantic orc sailors move quickly into view and then back into obscurity as they busy themselves at securing the ship. At one point, two lithe, cloaked figures drop to the deck from the rigging on either side of Heskin. They are identically dressed in tightly wrapped silken scarves, small devilish horns sprouting from their heads. The cloaked figures spare condescending glances at Heskin, their eyes glowing faintly with infernal fire before they move out of sight toward the ship's unseen bow. Soon thereafter, a blazing red-skinned humanoid with an immense, bulging frame strides almost casually through the scene. The rain sizzles into steam as it strikes his burning skin. As he reaches Heskin, he looks down at the man and then looks toward the bow, crying out, "Darl! It looks like your pet might be taking on water!" With that, the creature explodes into a tremendous belly laugh. A few moments later, another two figures step into view. The smaller of the two is a shifty-eyed humanoid bird who wears a hooded cloak and carries a repeating crossbow. The other is a towering man clothed in flowing blue robes trimmed with eye designs. His cowl protects his face from the wind and his hands are obscured by long, rain-soaked sleeves. He squats before Heskin and speaks to him in a low voice, "Only a few hours more, Heskin, and we shall see if you live or die."

Suddenly, the blue-robed man's head whips around to look directly into the scrying sensor. His face is pale but commanding, and twists into a snarl as he stands. "It seems we have guests, my friends," he says. "Perhaps allies of this cur?" He turns back to the bound man, and as he does he pulls back his left sleeve, revealing a rotten, black-nailed appendage that seems to writhe and twitch with its own life. "We can't have your friends watching us, so it seems your journey comes to an early end, Hesken!" The putrid hand unfurls and reaches out to caress Heskin's brow. Heskin shrieks in mortal pain as the fingertip freezes the skin it touches into an angry black scar. The blue-robed man then makes a fist and utters a single unintelligible word. As he utters the word, Hesken's eyes bulge, the cords in his neck throb, and he slumps against his bonds, dead. The scrying link is broken, and the image fades from view.

A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana or religion) or bardic knowledge check is enough for any observers to correctly identify the significance of the rotting hand—it is none other than the *Hand of Vecna*, a dreadful artifact capable (among other things) of creating a *blasphemy* effect, as the PCs just witnessed. Characters who received Vision 6 at the end of "The Spire of Long Shadows" recognize the man and the hand as the same cackling man and withered hand they saw as part of that vision.

After the vision, Lashonna returns to her seat, obviously a little shaken by the revelation that the *Hand of Vecna* has entered play. She's quick to recover, though, and uses the new knowledge to urge the PCs to make haste in their journey to Tilagos Island.

During the meeting, Lashonna answers any questions the PCs may have as best she can without tipping her hand; remember that her main goal is to get the PCs to take on the task of destroying Dragotha, and the logical first step in that plan is to go to Tilagos. Some possible questions the PCs might ask of her (and her responses) are given below.

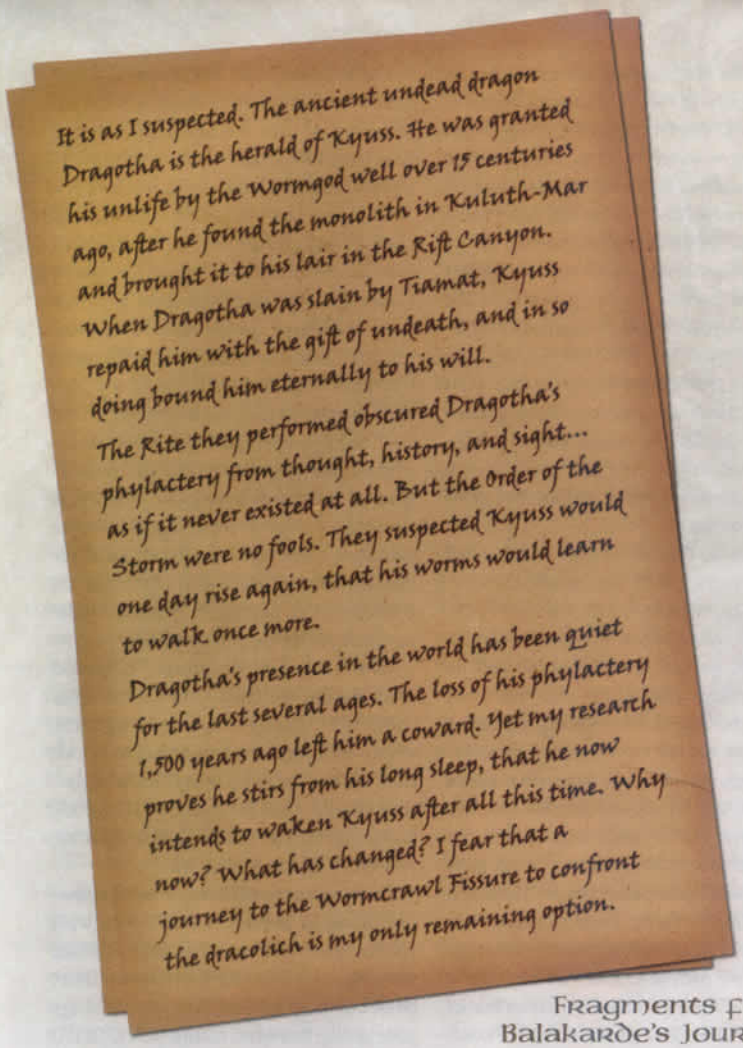
How did you come into the possession of Balakarde's journal? "He left it with me, sixteen years ago. I assume he meant to come back for it, but he never did. It's taken a beating in those sixteen years, but I've managed to preserve the key parts of its contents at least."

You're evil/a dragon/a vampire! Why should we trust you? "What I am shouldn't matter. I've spent years getting where I am, and I'm not about to see all that washed away by Dragotha, and neither should you. Take care of Dragotha, and if you still feel that I can't be trusted, you know where to find me."

Can you come with us, or send someone along to aid us? "I can't come with you for reasons of my own, and I'm afraid that any allies that I have simply wouldn't be of any help against the type of things your group has been facing lately. To tell the truth, I can't think of anyone other than your group that could have a chance against Dragotha."

Why can't Dragotha just kill himself to find his phylactery? "If he could be sure that such a gambit would be successful, he would certainly have done so. But since he hasn't, it's fair to assume he believes that doing so would be like walking into a trap. He's no fool; he would expect that if the Order of the Storm went through the trouble to steal his phylactery and do such a good job hiding it that they'd have something ready in case he tried something as desperate as self-destruction."

Where is Tilagos Island? "Tilagos Island is located in the northern reaches of the Nyr Dyv. It doesn't appear on most maps, but I happen to have some that


It is as I suspected. The ancient undead dragon Dragotha is the herald of Kyuss. He was granted his unlife by the Wormgod well over 15 centuries ago, after he found the monolith in Kuluth-Mar and brought it to his lair in the Rift Canyon. When Dragotha was slain by Tiamat, Kyuss repaid him with the gift of undeath, and in so doing bound him eternally to his will.
The Rite they performed obscured Dragotha's phylactery from thought, history, and sight... as if it never existed at all. But the Order of the Storm were no fools. They suspected Kyuss would one day rise again, that his worms would learn to walk once more.
Dragotha's presence in the world has been quiet for the last several ages. The loss of his phylactery 1,500 years ago left him a coward. Yet my research proves he stirs from his long sleep, that he now intends to waken Kyuss after all this time. Why now? What has changed? I fear that a journey to the Wormcrawl Fissure to confront the dracolich is my only remaining option.

Fragments from Balakarde's Journals

give its location. At least, its approximate location."

How can we get to Tilagos Island? "Oh my, if you need help with that, maybe you shouldn't be tangling with what awaits you there. Take a boat? Fly a dragon? Teleport? I'm sure you've got plenty of options available."

Getting to Tilagos Island

The route the PCs choose to reach Tilagos Island and the method of transport they choose to use is left firmly in their hands. The island itself is located about 20 miles from the northern shore of the Lake of Unknown Depths and approximately 100 miles to the west of Alhaster. Issue #341 of *Dragon* presents several options that high-level characters can take for overland travel.

Tilagos Island itself is constantly surrounded by powerful storms, to a radius of five miles. Travelers who wish to reach the island must contend with these constant hurricane-force winds. This storm is magical in nature, the product of an ancient ritual. As such, it resists attempts at control. A *control weather* spell automatically fails to calm the storm unless the caster makes a DC 30 caster level check (Darl tried to calm the storm in this manner but failed, and his ship and crew paid the price). A druid or a cleric with the Air domain gets a +10 sacred bonus on this check.

Feel free to add any encounters with sea monsters, rogue waves, sinking ships, or anything else that might spice up the journey, but eventually the PCs should catch sight of the barren, ragged shores of Tilagos Island.

PART TWO—ISLAND OF STORMS

To casual observation, Tilagos Island is nothing to look at—it's little more than an inhospitable rock jutting from a tortured sea. The constant winds and driving rain have long since scoured anything resembling vegetation or even soil from the rocks, leaving nothing but jagged spires of twisted wet stone. The island itself is roughly oval-shaped, about a mile long and a half-mile wide. Its highest point is a jagged pinnacle 500 feet above sea level. Most of its coastline consists of intimidating 100-foot-high cliffs, with a single rocky beach on the eastern face. This beach holds the only unusual feature on the entire island—a maze of ancient black basalt walls and standing stones that rise out of sight into the storm above. These ruins are all that remains of an Order of the Storm complex that once served as the portal to the island beyond. Today, these ruins hide the entrance to the island's interior, brutally torn free of the Material Plane nearly 1,500 years ago and hidden in a demiplane of its own.

When the PCs arrive, they do so a few days after Darl Quethos's ship crashed against the jagged rocks that surround the beach. Darl abandoned his crew as he and his most trusted minions searched the ruins and discovered the portal to the island interior.

Allow the PCs to approach the beachhead and the ruins in any way they wish; apart from endless Balance checks to clamber over the slippery rocks on the rest of the island and Fortitude saves to resist being knocked around by the hurricane-force winds, there is nothing for them elsewhere on the island. The beachhead is the only part of the island that exists in a sheltered dome of relatively calm winds and constant rainy drizzle. The storm rages all around the beach (as indicated on the map), and roars above at a height of about 60 feet, but as long as the PCs stay within this zone, they avoid the surrounding maelstrom entirely.

The Maze of Menhirs
N
M6
M4
M5
M2
M3
M1
One square = 10 feet

M1. Shipwreck Beach (EL 17)

The beachhead is littered with driftwood and the splintered ruin of well over a hundred ships. These skeletal wrecks crowd the rocky shoreline, a veritable city of barnacle-claimed vessels peopled with dead sailors. Broken skeletons wrapped in threadbare rags hang out of yawning breaches in the ships' hulls, and tattered sails whip in the fierce winds sweeping the shoreline. One ship stands out from these weathered hulks—a recent victim of the wind and rocks, although a victim nonetheless. This gigantic sailing cog lies broken in two against a jagged rock on the eastern edge of the beach. Beyond the shore, the rocky beach angles up slightly to an ancient maze of ruined walls and standing stones.

The recent shipwreck is that of the *Secret Hand*, the same ship that the PCs saw in the vision in Lashonna's study.

The ruins to the north are a natural place for creatures to seek shelter from the surrounding storm. As a result, they are quite dangerous, with several monsters living in an uneasy truce with each other. This adds an unintended wrinkle to the process of entering the extraplanar Tilagos Island interior, since the crystals required to activate the portal to the demiplane (area **M6**) are scattered throughout the ruins. The orcs that have taken shelter on this beach know about some of the monsters, but not about the crystals or the portal itself.

Creatures: A towering barbarian named Grogriss Spit-Eye was the captain of the *Secret Hand*, and he and those of his orc crew who survived the wreck have been all but abandoned here by Darl. The Vecnan cleric promised Grogriss that he'd come back in a few days to aid in their return to the mainland, but Grogriss knows better than to believe these lies. He had his crew salvage what supplies they could scavenge from the *Secret Hand* and the other wrecks, and now supervises a desperate attempt to rebuild the shattered ship.

Orc Pirates (8) **CR 8**

Female and male orc barbarian 3/rogue 5
CE Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Orc

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; improved uncanny dodge
hp 62 (8 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +1; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee +1 *greataxe* +13/+8 (1d12+10/x3)
Ranged mwk javelin +10 (1d6+6)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +12
Atk Options Improved Overrun, Power Attack, rage 1/day, sneak attack +3d6
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 22, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 6
SQ light sensitivity, trapfinding, trap sense +2
Feats Alertness, Improved Overrun, Power Attack
Skills Climb +12, Hide +12, Jump +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Profession (sailor) +5, Search +12, Spot +12, Survival +7, Swim +3
Possessions combat gear, +1 *greataxe*, +2 *hide armor*, 4 masterwork javelins

Rage (Ex) While raging the pirates' statistics change as follows:
hp 78
AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 13; improved uncanny dodge
Melee +1 *greataxe* +15/+10 (1d12+13/x3)
Ranged mwk javelin +10 (1d6+8)
Grp +14
Fort +8, **Will** +3; evasion
Abilities Str 26, Con 18
Skills Climb +14, Jump +14, Swim +5

Grogriss Spit-Eye **CR 16**

Male orc fighter 16
CE Medium humanoid
Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Orc

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19
hp 124 (16 HD)
Fort +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

Spd 30 ft.
Melee +1 *adamantine greataxe* +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d12+10/x3)
Ranged +1 *speed composite longbow* +24/+24/+19/+14/+9 (1d8+11/19–20/x3) or +1 *speed composite longbow* +22/+22/+22/+17/+12/+7 (1d8+11/19–20/x3) or
+1 *speed composite longbow* +16/+16/+16/+16 (1d8+11/19–20/x3)
Base Atk +16; **Grp** +22
Atk Options Improved Precise Shot, Manyshot, Rapid Shot
Combat Gear *oil of align weapon, potion of barkskin, potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of protection from good*

Abilities Str 22, Dex 21, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6
SQ light sensitivity
Feats Far Shot, Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (longbow), Greater Weapon Specialization (longbow), Improved Critical (longbow), Improved Initiative, Improved Precise Shot, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Intimidate +7, Profession (sailor) +5
Possessions combat gear, +3 *studded leather armor*, +1 *animated heavy steel shield*, +1 *adamantine greataxe*, +1 *speed composite longbow* (+6 Strength) with 15 adamantine arrows, 15 silver arrows, 15 cold iron arrows, and 15 arrows, *quiver of Ehlonna, belt of giant Strength +4, gloves of Dexterity +2, amulet of health +2, cloak of resistance +2*

Tactics: As soon as the orcs notice the PCs' arrival, they fan out among the wrecks in order to defend their temporary home. They aren't in the best shape for combat, but are ready to do what it takes to make sure that their efforts to escape the beach aren't ruined by newcomers. If the PCs attack, the orcs hurl their javelins at them and then move among the shipwrecks in an attempt to draw the PCs into ambushes with other hiding orcs. Grogriss Spit-Eye immediately takes cover and fires on the party with his bow, resorting to melee only if forced.

Development: If the PCs try to establish communication with the orcs (or if they capture some of them alive) they find that the orcs aren't really looking for a fight. Their initial attitude is unfriendly, but if made friendly they'll bring the PCs to talk to Grogriss (or, if he's been killed, any surviving orc). Grogriss can tell the PCs that he was hired by Darl Quethos a week ago to bring him and his hench-

men to this stormy isle—the cleric paid them a lot of money up front for the task, and promised more once they arrived. Of course, the ship wrecked on the jagged rocks when they arrived, and Darl and his henchmen quickly entered the ruins to the north. Grogriss and some of his crew tried to explore the ruins not long after, but were forced to retreat when they were attacked by monsters—creatures Grogriss describes as "loud, angry rocks with lots of ropes." All of the orcs fear Darl, as they have seen him and the *Hand of Vecna* in action and know they're no match for him.

M2. Pool of Red Crystals (EL 16)

A murky tidal pool thick with moldering driftwood and clumps of seaweed fills this bowl-shaped opening in the ruins. Growing from this tangle of wood and water is an immense black plant. Its roots coil out through the surrounding water and its twisted trunk supports eight rubbery-looking dark branches that sway gently in the wind.

This tide pool holds one of the three types of crystal needed to activate the portal in area **M6**. The crystals grow along the bottom of the 50-foot-deep pool of water in a 20-foot-square bed. The crystals themselves glow with a faint flickering red light, which makes them easy to notice for anyone who enters the murky water and approaches within 10 feet. Beyond this range, it's a DC 15 Spot check to notice the glowing crystals—this DC increases by one for every additional foot beyond 10 feet. From above the surface of the pool it's a DC 55 Spot check to notice them.

Creatures: The strange and ominous plant floating on this pool's surface is in fact a dangerous predator called an octopus tree. These intelligent carnivorous plants float on ocean currents near shipping lanes where they hunt for food; this octopus tree drifted too closely to the storms surrounding Tilagos and was swept into this calm section of the storm. The monster has no wish to brave the storm again to escape, and despite the relatively lean pickings here has remained in this area for many months. It waits for creatures to come within its reach before it whips into life (incidentally triggering its frightful presence). If assaulted by creatures at range, the octopus tree responds with *call lightning*, *repel wood* (works well against enemies using wooden weapons and shields), and *walls of thorns* to split apart its enemy.

Advanced Octopus Tree **CR 16**

NE Gargantuan plant

Fiend Folio 130

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +19

Aura frightful presence (30 ft., DC 26)

Languages Common (cannot speak)

AC 30, touch 2, flat-footed 30

hp 299 (26 HD); regeneration 10

Immune acid; plant traits

Fort +22, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

Spd 10 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee* 8 tentacles +25 (4d6+19/19–20) and bite +19 (4d8+12/19–20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Base Atk +19; **Grp** +45

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, improved grab (tentacle, bite)

Special Atk swallow whole

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th)

At will—*diminish plants*, *entangle* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*, *plant growth*, *warp wood* (DC 15)

3/*day*—*call lightning* (DC 16), *repel wood*, *wall of thorns*

*Includes adjustment for 5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 38, Dex 3, Con 26, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 16

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Improved Critical (bite, tentacle), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (tentacle), Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*warp wood*), Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Spot +19, Swim +36

Frightful Presence (Ex) All creatures that have fewer than 26 Hit Dice must make a DC 26 Will save each round they remain within 30 feet of the octopus tree or become shaken as long as they remain in this area. A successful save leaves that opponent immune to that octopus tree's frightful presence for one day.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, the octopus tree must hit with a tentacle or bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and automatically deals bite damage on any succeeding round during which it maintains this hold.

Regeneration (Ex) An octopus tree takes lethal damage from fire and cold.

Swallow Whole (Ex) The octopus tree can attempt to swallow a Large or smaller foe it successfully grapples with its bite attack. Once inside, the opponent takes 3d6+14 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d6 points of acid damage per round. A swallowed creature can cut its way out using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 20 points of damage to the internal cavity (AC 26). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole. An octopus tree's internal cavity can hold 1 Large, 4 Medium, or 16 Small or smaller opponents.

Treasure: In addition to the swath of crystals on the pool's bed, the remains of several sailors, pirates, and explorers who have wrecked on Tilagos and stumbled into the reach of the octopus tree await discovery there as well, although they are covered with a thick layer of silt. A DC 30 Search check turns up mostly rotten and decaying equipment, although one decomposed skeleton still bears a *scabbard of keen edges* with a +2 *anarchic longsword* sheathed within. Another algae-plastered corpse wears *druid's vestments* and *slippers of spider climbing*, and clutches a *strand of prayer beads* (with a *bead of blessing*, *bead of karma*, and a *bead of smiting*).

M3. The Forest of Stony Teeth (EL 17)

The ruins here are complicated with a new feature; numerous spindly stone stalagmites fill the area. The rocky growths are carved with strange slash-like glyphs along vertical lines, but seem to have no other purpose. A small tangle of green glowing crystals grows from the base of a stalagmite near the center of this area.

The runes on the stalgmites are written in Druidic—their topics vary wildly. Some of them detail aspects of the natural world like local weather patterns or

the eating habits of sharks, while others are simply gibberish. The stalagmites around the exterior of this area contain various narratives like chapters in an ongoing history, but on the stalagmites toward the center of the forest of stone spires, the glyphs are arranged in chaotic nonsensical patterns and many of the ideograms seem warped, their meaning difficult to discern. The green crystals that grow at the base of the central stalagmite are one of the three types of crystals needed to open the portal at area **M6**.

Creatures: These stalagmites are actually the product of a bizarre experiment the druids engaged in centuries ago. At one time, they had hoped to find a way to continue recording the history of the natural world long after the death of their order. They combined powerful divination and transmutation magic to create a new species of roper that would propagate young bearing accurate accounts of the times encrusted on their stony hides. The experiment failed. The offspring's glyphs range from inaccurate accounts to senseless combinations of ideograms and warped runes whose meaning is impossible to fathom. Although this experiment eventually inspired the creation of the *Fountain of Dreams* (a much more successful method of storing knowledge), the Order of the Storm abandoned their roper project several years before they battled Kyuss.

Only eight of these unusual ropers still live, although they are horribly inbred and lack the strange intelligence that most ropers posses. They do retain their instinctual need to catch and eat anything they see.

Ropers (6): hp 85 each; Int 2; Skills Climb +4, Hide +10 (+18 in stony or icy areas), Listen +5, Spot +5; *Monster Manual* 215.

M4. Krekie's Camp (EL 17)

This section of the ruin seems more dilapidated than the rest; an entire section of wall to the south here has collapsed into a sizable mound of broken stone at some time in the distant past.

Although the pile of rubble along the south certainly looks solid, it is in fact a *permanent image* of a pile of rubble placed here by Krekie, Darl Quethos' assassin minion (she used a scroll of *permanent image* to accomplish this feat). Anyone who interacts with the illusion can attempt a DC 19 Will save to discern the truth. The area within the illusion has been claimed by Krekie as her campsite—anyone who can see through the illusion can see the kenku's simple campsite consisting of a bedroll and an unlit campfire.

Creatures: Darl Quethos knows someone's been spying on him, and assumes it was Lashonna (he knew of her connection to Heskin). Concerned that she's after the Library of Last Resort as well and probably sent agents of her own, Darl asked Krekie to stay here on the beach and watch for anyone who tries to follow. Krekie's a bit annoyed at not being able to accompany the others into the island interior, but the opportunity to murder a few PCs is enough to keep her interest.

Krekie spends a fair amount of her time slinking through the ruins, keeping an eye out for signs of intruders, so there's only a 40% chance she's actually here when the PCs arrive. If she's not, she returns here within the hour and likely notices any signs that visitors have been here.

Moments after Krekie hatched from her egg, her nest of kenku was wiped out by a band of human rogues and assassins. The leader of these killers, a man named Skravor, found Krekie and decided to keep the pathetic kenku as a pet. Krekie's penchant for stealth and murder surprised and pleased her new "father." Skravor enjoyed the irony of training the hatchling of his former

Krekie

enemy as an assassin in his own guild, until he made the mistake of sending her after Darl Quethos. Darl captured Krekie, but saw great potential within her cold avian eyes. He offered to explain the greater mysteries of the universe to her in return for her loyalty. The first secret he revealed was the truth behind Krekie's "adoption." Krekie was enraged, and slew Skravor and his entire guild in a night of red ruin to avenge her family's death. She returned to swear allegiance to the Hand of the Lich-Lord. The scurrilous kenku has since become a fanatical follower of Vecna. Krekie believes this mission to Tilagos to be the greatest achievement of her life and is giddy to play any part in its success.

KREKIE **CR 17**

Female kenku rogue 6/ranger 1/assassin 10
NE Medium humanoid (kenku)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision, Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Ignan, Infernal, Kenku

AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 21; Dodge, Mobility; improved uncanny dodge

hp 96 (111 with *false life*) (17 HD)

Fort +11 (+16 vs. poison), **Ref** +21, **Will** +8; evasion

Spd 30 ft.

Melee *sword of subtlety* +18/+13/+8 (+22/+17/+12 sneak attack) (1d6+1/19–20 [1d6+5/19–20 sneak attack])

Ranged *+1 repeating light crossbow* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+1/19–20 plus poison [DC 18, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str])

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Spring Attack, death attack (DC 25), favored enemy +2 (humanoid [human]), sneak attack +8d6

Combat Gear flask of dragon bile poison (4), Large scorpion venom (10 doses), scroll of *hallucinatory terrain*, scroll of *mirage arcana*, scroll of *permanent image* (2), *wand of cure light wounds* (47 charges), *wand of darkvision* (17 charges), *wand of mirror image* (27 charges)

Assassin Spells Known (CL 10th)

4th (3/day)—*dimension door, freedom of movement, glibness, greater invisibility*

3rd (4/day)—*deeper darkness, false life, magic circle against good, nondetection*

2nd (4/day)—*fox's cunning, invisibility, pass without trace, spider climb*

1st (4/day)—*feather fall, jump, obscuring mist, true strike*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ great ally, hide in plain sight, mimicry, poison use, trapfinding, trap sense +2, wild empathy +0

Feats Ability Focus (death attack), Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Repeating Crossbow), Mobility, Spring Attack, Track, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +12, Bluff +4, Concentration +18, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Escape Artist +18, Hide +35, Jump +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +35, Spot +11, Survival +8, Tumble +15, Use Magic Device +18

Possessions combat gear, *+3 improved silent moves leather armor, +2 mithral buckler, sword of subtlety, +1 repeating light crossbow* with 40 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1, gloves of Dexterity +2, headband of intellect +2, boots of speed, cloak of resistance +2, ring of chameleon power*

Great Ally (Ex) When successfully aided on a skill check or attack roll by an ally, or when aiding another, a kenku applies or gains a +3 bonus on its check or attack roll (instead of the normal +2 bonus). Furthermore, a kenku gains a +4 bonus on attack rolls against an opponent flanked by an ally.

Mimicry (Ex) A kenku can perfectly mimic familiar sounds, voices and accents. This ability does not enable the kenku to speak languages it can't normally speak. To duplicate a specific individual's voice, a kenku makes a Bluff check; a listener familiar with the voice being imitated must succeed on an opposed Sense Motive check to discern that the voice isn't genuine.

Tactics: Once Krekie knows the PCs are in the area, she seeks them out under the cover of invisibility and stalks them. If anyone sets out on their own or becomes separated from the rest of the group, she tries to assassinate that PC. If she fails to kill him, she attempts to escape; Krekie has no interest in getting into a fight with a group of adventurers all at once. If the PCs move through the portal in area **M6**, she follows them a few minutes later (she relies on Use Magic Device to get through the portal, and doesn't know about the proper way to activate it using the crystals). She continues to stalk the party through the island interior, attempting to pick them off one at a time as they stray too far from the group. She only reveals herself and attacks the entire group when they finally confront Darl.

Development: Krekie is a complete and utter zealot, and cannot be reasoned with unless she is magically controlled. A charmed or dominated Krekie can be an excellent source of information about Darl and his other minions. She knows he's here to uncover a wealth of hidden secrets, but knows little else about the island interior.

M5. Crystal Pedestal

What once may have been a collection of four impressive statues of marble and basalt has been reduced to a pile of shattered rubble. Fragments of the statues lie in heaps throughout this area.

These four statues were actually golem-like guardians of one of the crystal beds required to trigger the portal in area **M6**. Darl and his crew came too close to this area on their passage through the ruins and attracted the golems' attention. The resulting battle was intense, but the Vecnans managed to defeat the golems without taking any casualties.

A DC 20 Search of the area reveals traces of blood sheltered from the constant drizzling rain by an overhanging rock, indicating a battle took place here. A DC 25 Search check notices a strange flickering blue glow coming from below the fallen torso of one of the statues. The torso weighs 500 pounds; if it is moved, the ground below is revealed to be a swath of shattered blue crystals. These are one of the three crystals required to activate the gate at area **M6**, although none of them are whole anymore and they must be repaired with a *make whole* or similar spell (*mending* is insufficient to do the job) before they can be of use. *Stone shape* cast upon the crystal bed can shape a new crystal into the right size and shape from the existing fragments, and a skilled jeweler can make a DC

25 Craft (gemcutting) check to repair a damaged crystal (this takes an hour of work). Other solutions can work as well, as you see fit.

M6. Portal of Storms

A circular disc hewn from obsidian lies here, its rim decorated with strange runes. At three points around the disc's circumference, stylized eyes have been carved, each with a shallow hollow carved within to represent the pupil.

The runes on this disc repeat a simple phrase in Druidic: "Return my eyes to me, and I shall gaze through the storm." This disc is in fact the portal to the demiplane of Last Resort. The proper way to activate the portal is to gather three crystals from their beds scattered throughout these ruins and place them in the eye sockets (the order doesn't matter). Doing so causes the runes along the disc's rim to glow with the colors of the gemstones, these colors fading into each other as the runes wind around the circle toward the next crystal in line.

At this point, the obsidian disc generates a potent field of multiple *antipathy* effects. This field affects all creatures who do not possess a neutral component to their alignment (lawful good, chaotic good, lawful evil, and chaotic evil creatures). Affected creatures suffer as if affected by *antipathy*.

Undead who attempt to use the portal are faced with an additional challenge. Any undead creature that tries to pass through the portal must also make a DC 20 Fortitude save or take 20d6 points of positive energy damage and be thrown 1d10x10 feet away from the portal; success halves the damage done and allows access to Last Resort.

There is a way to bypass much of this, however. A series of three or four Use Magic Device checks (three consecutive successful DC 25 Use Magic Device checks to trigger the three crystal eyes by activating them blindly followed immediately by a DC 30 Use Magic Device check to emulate a neutral alignment, if necessary) are enough to activate the portal as well.

Once the portal is activated, it remains so for one minute before it deactivates. If the portal was activated using crystals, the crystals themselves are consumed as the portal deactivates. Any creature standing upon the portal's surface is immediately transported into the demiplane of Last Resort.

PART THREE: THE TILAGOS TRIALS

The demiplane of Last Resort is a relatively small world, a finite space adrift somewhere behind the Ethereal Plane. Last Resort consists of an ocean without a shoreline that surrounds a single island—Tilagos Island, as it appeared 1,500 years ago before the Order of the Storm transported it from the Material Plane to here. A character who travels too far out to sea in one direction away from the island finds himself approaching the island from the opposite side; this warping effect occurs at a distance of 5 miles from Tilagos. Characters who fly straight up find that no matter how far up they fly, they can never fly further than a mile from the surface of the sea below. Likewise, those who swim into the sea's depths find no sea bottom; the submerged island slopes extend downward forever, but a swimmer finds it impossible to swim further than a mile down. The island itself is fairly sizable; much larger than its coastline on the Material Plane would suggest.

Although Last Resort is connected to the Ethereal Plane and the Elemental Planes, it has no connection to the Astral Plane or the Plane of Shadow. As a result, the following spells do not function in Last Resort: *astral projection*, *dimension door*, *greater shadow conjuration*, *greater shadow evocation*, *greater teleport*, *shades*, *shadow conjuration*, *shadow evocation*, *shadow walk*, *teleport*, *teleport object*, and *teleportation circle*. Creatures cannot be summoned from either of these planes using magic. Spells that establish planar connections (such as *commune*, *contact other plane*, *gate*, and *plane shift*) function normally.

As a part of the ritual that created Last Resort, the druids infused the demiplane with positive energy to ward it against the servants of their nemesis. As a result of this infusion, Last Resort is a riotous explosion of life in all its forms. Colors are brighter, fires hotter, noises louder, and sensations are more intense throughout the island. No undead creature may be created anywhere on the demiplane, and any undead creature that travels there loses its Wisdom and Charisma scores and is treated as an inanimate object for as long as it remains in Last Resort.

In all other regards, the plane of Last Resort functions identically to the Material Plane. The sky above is constantly overcast, but the day/night cycle behaves the same as on the Material Plane (even though the sun, moon, and stars are never seen). Time passes normally, although there are no seasonal shifts. The temperature fluctuates slightly, but never moves further than five degrees from the baseline of 65° F.

Travelers who come to Last Resort via the portal at area **M6** appear on a similar obsidian disc in the center of the island. This disc is a portal that functions automatically for all creatures that used the portal in area **M6**; it does not function at all for a creature that is native to Last Resort or one that arrived here via a different means. A character activates the return portal simply by standing on the disc and willing the portal to open as a free action.

When the PCs arrive in Last Resort, read them the following description.

The sudden shift in environment is shocking and overwhelming for a moment. The sound of the raging tempest is gone, replaced by a gentle wind carrying birdsongs and the drone of buzzing insects. The sky above is overcast, yet it doesn't seem ready to storm.

The edge of a sprawling black forest, dense and overgrown, fills the view in one direction. Tall trees sag with branches heavy with moss, their dark eaves dropping to the ground in some places. From within comes a cacophony of insects and singing birds. Now and then, a ghostly green glow appears within, only to fade moments later, as if whatever creature was generating the light was afraid to be seen.

In the other directions grassy hills rise. Opposite the forest, these hills eventually become a range of rocky, barren mountains. A flash of brilliant lightning ignites the sky above the mountains for a moment, and the distant peal of muted thunder echoes down the slopes a few moments after.

When the last surviving members of the Order of the Storm sacrificed themselves to hide Tilagos Island and the *Fountain of Dreams* in the demiplane of Last Resort, they did not truly die. Instead, their bodies and souls were swept up by the powerful magic, and once the ritual was complete, the druids were reincarnated into this new realm as powerful fey. These are the wild watchers, and they are as one with the realm of Last Resort. These new monsters are detailed in the Appendix.

When the PCs arrive, the wild watchers sense their arrival immediately. As they did with Darl several days before, the four surviving wild watchers immediately seek out the PCs, using *transport via plants* to step out of nearby pine trees. The four watchers make no attempt to hide their appearance from the PCs, but neither do they threaten them. The wild watchers give the PCs a moment to react to their appearance, their elemental standards writhing behind them. If the PCs attack them on sight, the four wild watchers bring their full powers against the group. The wild watchers do not fight to kill; rather, they seek to incapacitate and capture the PCs. If the PCs manage to kill all four wild watchers, they have unknowingly destroyed their only point of access to the *Fountain of Dreams*.

Assuming the PCs don't attack the four fey guardians, one of them steps forth to address the group.

"I am Tylanthros, guardian of this realm. We are the Last Resort, as surely as the trees and stones and sea and air around you. We protect the secrets of this island from all trespassers. You have mastered the portal of storms, and therefore must be brave, but it remains to be seen if you belong here at all. Why have you come to Last Resort?"

Allow the PCs a chance to reply in any way they see fit. Tylanthros accepts any response not calculated to offend him at face value (if the PCs say they're here to raze the land or something like that, he and the other wild watchers attack at once). If the PCs mention they seek knowledge of Dragotha's phylactery, Kyuss, or the Age of Worms, the wild watchers have no visible reaction. They are simply the guardians of this realm, and know nothing of the secrets that are contained in the *Fountain of Dreams*. If the PCs say they're looking for a library, or knowledge, or something similar, a smile plays across Tylanthros's lips. Once the PCs have stated their purpose here, he replies.

"You seek the Fountain, although you do not yet realize it. The Fountain of Dreams is linked to all things in Last Resort. The earth, the dark trees of the Doomshroud, the clouds above, my life and that of my brothers are a part of it. If the waters are consumed, the Order of the Storm's rite is undone. The secrets kept from the world will be released, and the great creatures of legend imprisoned here on this isle shall be unleashed upon the Material Plane once more. You say you are heroes? This remains to be seen. Accomplish four tasks and prove yourselves to be the heroes of old returned. The Fountain shall not be despoiled lightly."

The strange creature looks at his four brothers, then back to you. "The Fountain of Dreams shall know those destined for its gifts in but one way. It will know them by the Trials of Tilagos. Survive these trials, and you may slake your thirst on what you seek. Fail, and Last Resort shall be your grave. I am Tylanthros, and the first trial is the Claiming of Krathanos's Golden Belt."

A second of the quartet of creatures speaks up next. "I am Beskawahn, and the second trial is the Silence of the Doomshroud's Mournful Song."

The third speaks. "I am Thadimar, and the third trial is the Death of the Thorn Vale Nightmare."

Finally, the last creature speaks. "I am Sayren-Lei, and the final trial is the Harvest of the Living Feather of the Roc King."

Tylanthros speaks again. "These trials complete, return here and we shall show you the Fountain of Dreams. Until then, we shall watch. And wait."

The wild watchers immediately leave the area using *transport via plants* again, but if the PCs can make a DC 30 Diplomacy check (with a –10 penalty for having to rush as a full-round action), they can convince the wild watchers to stay for a few more moments to answer some questions. They remain close-lipped on most subjects, but if the PCs inquire about other recent visitors to the island, Tylanthros responds as follows.

"You speak of the Hand of the Lich-Lord. He has come to Tilagos with his flock, seeking knowledge as you do. Even as you linger, they seek to complete the tasks we have named. If they outspeed you, then the secrets of the Fountain are theirs. Who claims the secrets of the Fountain matters little to us, for once these secrets are claimed our role in Last Resort has come to an end."

Once the wild watchers depart, the PCs are free to explore Tilagos Island as they wish. The four trials are detailed below: they may be attempted in any order. Although there's an implied race against time, in fact the PCs have little to fear from Darl and his followers. The Vecnans tried to wrest away Krathanos' belt and failed, and then moved on to secure the feather of the Roc King. Eventually the PCs will encounter Darl, as detailed at the end of this part of the adventure.

Additional Encounters on Tilagos

The PCs should initially have little to go on regarding where they'll need to go to accomplish the four trials set before them by the wild watchers. Divination spells like *commune*, *contact other plane*, and *commune with nature* are an excellent source of information about the trials and Tilagos Island itself, provided the PCs ask the right questions. If the PCs are in range, *locate object* and *locate creature* can aid in divining the location of their targets (once they learn who and what they are). *Find the path* leads

the way to specific locations, and can be used to find the best route to the Keep of the Shackled Conqueror (trial 1), the Grove of Night (trial 2), Harrowdroth's Den (trial 3), or the Nest of the Roc King (trial 4), once the PCs learn the names of these locations from divination spells or local denizens.

As the characters move about the island, feel free to have them encounter the natural denizens of Tilagos Island. The druids of the Order of the Storm populated their island with numerous dangerous monsters for many reasons. In most cases they were merely relocating menaces they didn't wish to kill from locations where they were causing problems, but in a few cases, the monsters of Tilagos are remnants of guardians once used by the druids who have, in the 1,500 years since the Order's death, reverted to their true and feral natures. Apart from these dangerous monsters, Tilagos is ripe with normal animal life. Wild horses, antelopes, bison, and even a few lions, elephants, and rhinos roam the open plains. The Doomshroud forest is home to countless snakes, birds, tapirs, and jaguars. The highlands are populated by dark-furred mountain goats, yaks, condors, and dire bears. Even the seas surrounding the island are full of animal life.

This section provides several sample encounters with the indigenous life of Tilagos. Use them to give the PCs a challenge as they make their way across the island in search of one of their four trials, to provide them with additional experience or loot, or even to subtly point them in the right direction to their goal if they grow confused or impatient. Finally, you can use these encounters as templates to generate additional encounters of your own design.

Displacer Beast Attack! (EL 16)

The Order of the Storm kept a half-dozen trained displacer beast pack lords as guardians, but over time these creatures escaped their kennels and bred true. The displacer beast pack lords have become one of the primary predators of the island, preying on all of Last Resort's wildlife. They won't hesitate to add the PCs to the list of prey if they encounter them. The pack lords travel in groups of four, and can be encountered anywhere on Tilagos.

A character with Track can attempt a DC 25 Survival check to note the presence of displacer beast tracks as soon as the group wanders into their hunting grounds. It doesn't take much longer (usually only 1d6 minutes) for the PCs attract the attention of the pack, which begins stalking them. The displacer beasts strike either when the PCs make camp or circle around in front of the party to ambush them.

Displacer Beast Pack Lords (4): hp 203 each; *Monster Manual* 66.

Girallon Behemoths (EL 17)

Transported to Tilagos from a remote island on the Material Plane, the immense girallons found on Tilagos are solitary, cantankerous creatures that come together only to mate. They have since become the top predator in the island highlands, with the exception of Harrowdroth himself, and are capable

of catching, killing, and eating rocs. They rarely venture down to the lowlands—those that do generally do so after they've been driven from their mountain lair by other girallons. As a result, those encountered in the lowlands tend to be wounded or sick.

There are currently only 7 girallon behemoths living on Tilagos; each claims a territory of about a square mile. A DC 15 Survival check is good enough for a character to note the telltale signs that the group is entering girallon country by the increase in scattered bones and broken rocks. These monstrous girallons are larger even than the largest specimens found on the Material Plane—the otherworldly nature of Last Resort has suited them well. The average girallon behemoth stands 35 feet in height.

When a girallon behemoth notices someone has entered his territory (typically 3d6 minutes after a group does so), it rumbles out to issue a challenge to the intruder in the form of a thunderous roar and the beating of its chest with its four fists. If the intruders don't immediately flee, the girallon attacks, fighting until reduced to less than 30 hit points, at which point it tries to flee to its lair. A girallon encountered in or followed to its lair fights to the death.

Girallon Behemoth **CR 17**
N Gargantuan magical beast
Monster Manual 126
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +15, Spot +14
AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 22
hp 300 (24 HD)
Fort +21, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15
Spd 40 ft.; climb 40 ft.
Melee 4 claws +34 (2d6+14/19–20) and bite +29 (3d6+9)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.
Base Atk +24; **Grp** +50
Atk Options rend 2d8+21
Abilities Str 38, Dex 18, Con 24, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7
Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Natural Armor (5), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will
Skills Climb +22, Listen +15, Spot +14

Landshark (EL 16)

The bulettes of Tilagos, like the displacer beasts and girallons, have grown to immense proportions over the last 15 centuries. These menaces are solitary hunters, and while they generally keep to the southern plains of the island, they can be encountered anywhere but in the highest peaks of the mountains.

Creature: Tilagos bulettes spend most of their time underground, and quickly move to ambush anyone they notice. They make use of their leap special attack to damage as many PCs as they can in the first round of combat. If encountered in the Vale of Thorns, a combat with these burrowing menaces is much more difficult since the bulettes can use their burrow speed to avoid the thorns altogether.

Tilagos Bulette **CR 16**
N Gargantuan magical beast
Monster Manual 30
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +1
AC 30, touch 9, flat-footed 27
hp 364 (27 HD)
Fort +23, **Ref** +18, **Will** +9
Spd 40 ft., burrow 10 ft.
Melee bite +37 (4d8+13/19–20) and 2 claws +34 (4d6+6) or 4 claws +36 (4d6+6)
Base Atk +27; **Grp** +52
Atk Options leap
Abilities Str 36, Dex 16, Con 26, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Improved Critical (bite), Improved Natural Armor (5), Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Jump +37, Listen +11

First Trial: The Golden Belt (EL 22)

To complete the first trial, the PCs must bring the golden belt owned by the titan Krathanos to the wild watchers.

The broken remains of a keep lie on the southern ridge of Tilagos Island, overlooking the tumultuous sea below. This site was once the home of a group of rangers loyal to the Order of the Storm, and served as a training ground for the forces that faced Kyuss' putrefied horde in battle all those centuries past. The rangers of the keep were slaughtered in that battle, and it fell into disrepair.

When the druids began their preparations for the removal of Tilagos from the Material Plane, they approached Obad-Hai for aid. The god of nature heard their request and agreed to aid them in the task, on one condition. Tilagos would make a potent prison, and at the time, a particularly destructive titan had been a thorn in Obad-Hai's side for some time. This was Krathanos, a menace who had long plagued the world of men and elves, wreaking swaths of destruction and chaos wherever he went. Yet Obad-Hai sensed an underlying greatness in Krathanos, much as one might sense in the heart of a volcano or the eye of a storm. Obad-Hai asked the druids to find Krathanos a home on Tilagos Island, a place where there was little he could ruin and perhaps a place where the titan's wrath would eventually be soothed. In time, if Krathanos grew calm, Obad-Hai would release him.

The druids agreed, and Obad-Hai transported Krathanos (along with his gargoyle and beholder pets) to Tilagos as it was wrenched from the Material Plane. As he did, he took from Krathanos his *gate* spell-like ability, effectively stranding the titan in Last Resort. For the past 1,500 years, the titan has brooded in the demiplane, but his imprisonment has had the opposite effect Obad-Hai had hoped for. Rather than grow calm in the presence of nature, the loss of humans and elves to torment eventually drove the titan mad. Today, Krathanos balances on the line between boredom and insanity. He has long since grown bored with exploring the island, and spends all of his time brooding in the ruins of the southern keep. He still holds hope he will be freed of his imprisonment on some days, but most of the time he seeks only ways to amuse himself and pass the eons without succumbing to complete ennui. His gargoyle thralls live in constant fear of their master's wrath, but their unending loyalty is ensured by Krathanos' *charm monster* spell-like ability.

A DC 30 Knowledge (history or the planes) or bardic knowledge check indicates a character has heard vague tales of an ancient titan named Krathanos, a murderous menace whose reign ended abruptly when he vanished from the world fifteen centuries ago.

Krathanos has named his new home the "Keep of the Shackled Conqueror," a bitter reference to himself. The keep's structure is often the object of Krathanos' rage, and much of it has been destroyed over the centuries. Krathanos' gargoyle minions constantly toil at trying to rebuild the keep, but they can never get ahead of their master's unpredictable rages. As a result, the keep is little more than an empty walled compound. The walls themselves are 20 feet thick, 30 feet high, and made of solid stone, but show signs of considerable damage. Four partially collapsed towers surround the central compound. When the PCs reach the ruined keep, read them the following.

The weathered walls of the keep are torn and ragged. They appear to have been battered down on more than one occasion, their chipped stone blocks rebuilt haphazardly into makeshift structures with little integrity. Four crumbling towers overlook the outer courtyard. The archway providing entrance into the compound looms empty, its iron portcullis now nothing more than a heap of twisted black metal lying on the ground nearby.

Inside, several large foundation stones still stand; these can provide cover for desperate PCs. In the southwest corner of the compound are three crude cages built by Krathanos's gargoyles—the cages are used to keep strange monsters the titan periodically captures from the wilds of Tilagos to keep as pets. These cages consist of dozens of iron poles scavenged from the ruined keep. The poles have been driven into the ground, and a large flat slab of rock caps each cage. The only way into or out of a cage is by lifting the rock lid (which weighs 3,000 pounds—easy for Krathanos to lift, but likely trouble for smaller and weaker creatures).

Creatures: Krathanos keeps a flight of six advanced gargoyle fighters charmed as minions. At any one time, two of them wheel and flock in the skies above, keeping an eye out for any intruders. If they spy the PCs, these two gargoyles swoop down into the keep and gather the other four, and as a group of six they fly out to confront the PCs.

The gargoyles do not initially engage in battle with the characters. Krathanos has ordered them to bring any visitors to him for an audience. These audiences usually end with Krathanos beheading the visitors or smashing them to pulp, but the titan would not have sport robbed of him by his thralls. The gargoyles demand the PCs accompany them to meet the master of their domain: "Krathanos the Conqueror, exiled by the gods for his designs to rule all of creation, and shackled by the treacherous druids of Tilagos until such time as brave stalwarts arrive to free him." They promise the party food, lodging, and respite if they join them at the keep.

The cages in the southwest corner of the ruin currently contain three giallons apiece, for a total of nine of the magical beasts. They shriek and roar if they see anyone approach within thirty feet, but cannot escape from the iron-barred cages without aid.

Krathanos himself has spent the last few months in a torpor, slumped against the inside eastern wall of the keep. He is not roused by the sound of combat outside of his keep, but if combat breaks out or is carried into the compound he wakens quickly to a rage.

Krathanos is quite insane. His imprisonment wreaked havoc on his ego, and as a result his mood sways

erratically from jovial to furious. He plays the part of the gracious host one moment, only to crush his "honored guests" into paste at some imagined insult the next. He is, in every way, an embodiment of chaos and evil. Krathanos stands nearly 25 feet tall, his towering frame sculpted to perfection, with bulging cords of muscle lining every foot of his gigantic torso. He wears an enormous belt of solid gold encrusted with fist-sized emeralds—this is the same belt mentioned by the wild watchers. His weapon is an immense spiked warhammer.

Krathanos the Shackled Conqueror, chaotic evil titan: hp 370; lacks a *gate* spell-like ability; *Monster Manual* 242.

Girallons (9): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 126.

GARGOYLE MINIONS (6) **CR 12**

Advanced gargoyle fighter 4

CE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common, Terran

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 18

hp 203 (16 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Fort +16, Ref +13, Will +10

Spd 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +23 (1d6+8) and bite +21 melee (1d8+4) and gore +21 melee (1d8+4)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +21/+16/+11/+6 (2d6+11/x3) or +1 *composite longbow* +19/+19/+14/+9/+4 (2d6+11/x3)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +28

Atk Options Improved Precise Shot, Rapid Shot

Abilities Str 26, Dex 19, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4

SQ freeze

Feats Far Shot, Hover, Improved Precise Shot, Multiattack, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)

Skills Hide +7, Listen +9, Spot +9

Possessions +1 *leather armor*, +1 *composite longbow* (+8 Strength)

Tactics: The gargoyles wheel about in the sky above, using their composite longbows to attack at range.

If the PCs dare to do battle with Krathanos, he orders his gargoyles to stay out of the way when he wades into melee. He wants to savor every ounce of amusement from the party's destruction himself. Krathanos is a prodigious foe, and against a group of 16th or 17th-level characters he can be quite dangerous. Krathanos reflects this in his tactics, often showboating and bragging early in a combat rather than playing for keeps. He lashes out with quickened *chain lightning* in the first three rounds of combat, augmenting his melee attacks or other spell-like abilities for those rounds. If he manages to drop a PC and hasn't really taken much damage yet, he may spend the next round roaring with malicious laughter before continuing the fight. Only if the PCs put up an impressive resistance does Krathanos unleash a *fire storm*, *meteor swarm* or *Bigby's crushing hand* on them. If the PCs try to flee, Krathanos allows them to go, showering them with insults as they run.

If the battle moves into the keep, Krathanos moves over to the girallon cages and takes a full-round action to sweep the stone lids off the tops of the cages. The girallons within can climb out of the cages with a DC 10 Climb check (automatic for these monsters). The girallons know better than to attack the titan, but the PCs aren't so lucky.

If any of the PCs try to seek shelter near or in one of the dilapidated towers or the keep's crumbling wall, Krathanos can, as a full-round action, smash the tower with his warhammer. The titanic blow sends the tower crumbling down in any direction that Krathanos chooses, affecting everything within any adjacent twenty-foot square. Any creatures in this area take 8d6 points of damage, or half that amount if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. They are subsequently buried, as detailed in the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* on page 66, under "Cave-ins and Collapses."

Treasure: Krathanos' emerald-studded gold belt is worth 20,000 gp, but weighs 120 pounds—in order to satisfy the first trial, the PCs must bring this immense belt back to the wild watchers. The titan also wears three strings of enormous black pearls around his neck worth 5,000 gp each. His sack contains an ever-changing collection of treasure as he grows tired of old prizes and throws them into the sea, replacing them with trophies he salvages from other creatures on the island. Currently, his sack contains about sixty pounds of animal trophies (enormous bulette teeth, girallon heads, etc.). In addition, a battered iron chest contains 23,000 sp, three casks of ambergris (worth 50 gp per cask), and an ivory elf-maiden carved from a dire mammoth's tusk and inlaid with jewels worth 8,000 gp. The sack also contains the severed head of Darl's one-time minotaur companion (who came here at Darl's request to try to purchase the titan's belt), along with his Large +2 *icy burst greatsword*, Large +1 *mithral full plate of speed*, and *belt of giant Strength* +4.

Development: If the party presents themselves in a civil fashion, Krathanos reacts with polite grace. He attempts to convince them he is an honorable warrior and servant of Kord and beseeches their help in freeing him from this hateful prison. A *plane shift* or *gate* spell is sufficient to allow the titan to escape; he isn't particularly choosy on where he escapes to, as long as it isn't Last Resort. He'd much prefer to intimidate the PCs into helping him escape, but if the PCs can adjust his initial attitude of indifferent to helpful, he'll agree to give them his belt in return for payment. Krathanos refuses to part with his belt until he's safely on another plane, necessitating the PCs travel with him.

The longer any conversation with Krathanos wears on, the more likely his madness comes to the fore. After five minutes of conversation, he'll automatically misinterpret something the PCs have said and fly into a spitting rage, demanding the party take back their insult to his honor or be destroyed. If the PCs play along he is assuaged and continues to treat them like honored houseguests. If they continue to accuse him of his obvious fraud, Krathanos attacks immediately.

If the PCs ask Krathanos about other recent visitors to the island, the titan reaches into a discolored sack next to his

throne and produces the severed head of a minotaur and asks them if this is the one they're asking about. The titan says the minotaur came to purchase his golden belt on behalf of the "Hand of the Lich-Lord," but Krathanos hates things whose heads don't match the rest of their bodies so he pulled the minotaur's head off. He doesn't know about the others on the island yet.

The golden belt is Krathanos's favorite possession, and if the PCs attempt to haggle with him for the belt, they tread dangerous ground. He won't give it up unless offered something extremely entertaining and valuable. His first suggestion is a trade—the belt for one of the PCs. His greed for material wealth is nearly insatiable, so the PCs will need to offer him a bribe worth at least 200,000 gp before he agrees to a trade of items and money for the belt.

If asked about Kyuss and the Age of Worms, Krathanos lets out a long sigh as he dredges through centuries of memories before smiling: "Oh yes, I do remember a worm priest causing quite a fuss with the greenbeards ages ago. Kyuss is imprisoned now, not unlike myself. Someday we shall be free and your world will tremble at our power!" The titan knows nothing else about the current onset of the Age of Worms.

Second Trial: The Mournful Song (EL 20)

To complete the second trial, the PCs must slay (or otherwise permanently silence) the night twist that lives at the center of the Doomshroud Forest.

The Doomshroud Forest is a lonesome, alien landscape. Its black, monolithic trees appear to shift unnaturally without the aid of wind. The canopy blocks out the dim light provided by the overcast skies, and the forest is dark as night as a result.

The Doomshroud's drooping trees continuously weep a thick black ichor. This sap is oily and foul smelling, but is nonetheless edible and quite nutrient rich (DC 20 Survival check to determine this). A side effect of consuming the sap is that a PC's skin turns jet black like the trees, granting a +5 circumstance bonus on Hide checks in dark areas. This skin coloration persists for 1 hour after consuming a meal-sized portion of the sap.

Creature: Holding dominion over this unnatural forest is a bizarre, twisted black tree known as an ancient night twist, whose song saps the soul and draws unwary explorers to their death. The monstrous plant dwells in a grove at the center of the Doomshroud. No other tree grows near this 50-foot-tall menace. The night twist sways hypnotically, its many black branches undulating like serpents, dancing to the tune of its mournful melody.

To some, the song of the night twist sounds like the weeping of a woman who has lost her beloved, while to others it sounds like the cold baleful wind blowing over a desolate graveyard. The tree is old and unspeakably evil. This night twist was a sapling when the world was young. It grew, filled with malice, and plagued the dark forests of the world before the druids of the Order of the Storm decided to spirit the ancient tree away from the world. They transplanted it here, intending to study the malevolent tree's impact on the surrounding environment before disposing of it. Unfortunately, their own doom came before they could engineer that of the night twist.

Ancient Night Twist CR 20

NE Huge plant

Monster Manual III 110

Init -2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +17, Spot +18

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 38, touch 12, flat-footed 38

hp 412 (25 HD); DR 15/slashing

Immune plant traits

Fort +32, **Ref** +12, **Will** +19

Weakness vulnerability to fire

Spd 10 ft.

Melee 6 slams +33 (4d6+17)

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +51

Atk Options Blind Fight, Improved Sunder, Power Attack

Special Atk death curse, despair song, wind blast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

5/day—*phantasmal killer* (DC 20)

3/day—*blight* (DC 21), *circle of death* (DC 22), *deeper darkness*, *entangle* (DC 17), *fear* (DC 20), *insanity* (DC 23)

1/day—*weird* (DC 25)

Abilities Str 45, Dex 6, Con 34, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 23

SQ unholy grace

Feats Blind Fight, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Natural Armor (3), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Hide +6, Knowledge (nature) +18, Listen +17, Move Silently +8, Spot +18, Survival +17 (+19 aboveground)

Death Curse (Su) Killing an ancient night twist invites a curse similar to that bestowed by the *nightmare* spell. The creature dealing the death blow must make a DC 28 Will save or suffer horrific nightmares each night, suffering 1d10 damage and becoming fatigued and unable to prepare spells for the next 24 hours. The nightmares continue until the curse is removed. Even after removal of the curse the victim remains fatigued for 24 hours afterward. A *limited wish* spell or more powerful magic cast while the subject is in the throes of a nightmare is the only way to remove a night twist's death curse. If a victim of the death curse dies before the curse is lifted a new ancient night twist sapling appears at the gravesite.

Despair Song (Su) Every evening the ancient night twist emits a sorrowful sound that inspires melancholy in all creatures with an Intelligence score of 6 or higher within a radius of 1,250 feet (the radius of its clearing). Those hearing the song who fail a DC 28 Will save are affected as if by a *crushing despair* spell and must seek out the source of their sorrow (the ancient night twist) to the neglect of all other tasks or needs, including eating or sleeping. If physically restrained and not allowed to seek out the night twist, the victim loses 1d10 hit points every evening until it dies or the enchantment is lifted. Relocating the victim outside the area of effect does not end the enchantment. The despair song ceases to affect a subject the round after they are struck by the night twist's slam attack. Only a *limited wish* can remove the effect, but a bard's *song of freedom* class feature allows a second saving throw. The death of the night twist always ends the effect.

Unholy Grace (Su) A night twist adds its Charisma modifier as a bonus on all its saving throws, and as a deflection bonus to its Armor Class.

Wind Blast (Su) This ability is similar to the *gust of wind* spell. The creature can use its wind blast as a free action, but does so only when it feels threatened. A powerful, gale-force wind (50 mph) emanates from the tree in all directions out to 120 feet. A DC 28 Fortitude save is necessary to avoid this effect.

Tactics: The night twist attempts to lure the PCs to its grove with its despair song. If it succeeds in ensnaring all party members, it focuses its attacks on one PC first, allowing the others to remain in the throes of their mind-numbing despair as it finishes off the group one by one.

The night twist casts *weird* first, hoping the party's own fears will destroy them, and taking great pleasure in watching the hero's reactions to the imaginary horrors their brains concoct. After this, the tree casts *insanity* on a fighter-type (low Will save), hoping that in the throes of madness they attack their former allies. Then the tree employs *circle of death* and *phantasmal killer* to dispense with the rest of its foes. If its spell-like abilities seem to have limited results, the tree resorts to smashing the party to pieces with its powerful slam attacks, attempting to sunder any weapon that pierces its damage reduction.

Third Trial: Nightmare Vale (EL 18)

To complete the third trial, the PCs must destroy the nightmare beast Harrowdroth.

In the western reaches of the Tilagos highlands lies a valley nestled between two dark peaks. Known as the Vale of Thorns, this valley teems with wild underbrush bedecked with vicious irony thorns growing as long as six inches each. These briars rend the flesh of most creatures who brave the Vale.

The thorns grow to a height of 10 feet in the vale, and no trail or track leads through them. A creature can force its way through the thorns by making a Strength check as a full-round action. For every 5 points by which the check exceeds 10, a creature moves 5 feet (up to a maximum distance equal to its normal land speed). Moving through the thorns at any speed inflicts 2d6 points of piercing damage on a creature. The thorns are not magical, and can be burned away at a rate of one five-foot square per minute. Hacking one's way through the thorns is slower going, requiring 10 minutes of work per five feet traveled. Once cleared, the thorns are quick to regrow, returning to full height in a mere 24 hours. The woodland stride ability allows free passage through the thorns.

A single cave opening looms 30 feet above the top of the thorns on the northern cliffs; this is the entrance to Harrowdroth's lair, and clouds of steam constantly vent up from the cave opening, making it easy to locate from a distance. The cave itself contains two wide crevasses that nearly fill the cavern; Harrowdroth leaps over them with ease, but other creatures might not be so lucky. Each crevasse constantly vents thick clouds of steam that waft along the ceiling to escape via the cave mouth. Within 10 feet of the crevasse, or within the crevasses themselves, the steam is hot enough to scald for 5d6 fire damage per round (DC 15 Reflex save negates). Each crevasse is 200 feet deep and ends at the surface of a constantly boiling lake of water (the lake itself being nearly 500 feet deep, with a lake bed heated by rock close to a reservoir of magma). A fall into either crevasse deals 2d3 nonlethal damage and 16d6 lethal damage, after which the immersion in boiling water inflicts 10d6 points of fire damage per round. The walls of each crevasse are slippery with condensed water; it's a DC 30 Climb check to scale them. Remember that while a character is within the steam,

he has concealment against other creatures within five feet and total concealment against creatures further out.

Creature: Few creatures dwell in the Vale of Thorns. Small birds nest in its upper reaches, and periodically Tilagos bulettes travel under the thorns. The true terror of the Vale is much more fearsome than a mere bulette—this is the nightmare beast Harrowdroth. This dread monstrosity dwells in a large cavern on the northern inner rim of the Vale of Thorns.

Harrowdroth's power over dreams has caused the ruination of entire kingdoms in centuries past. Shortly before the druids of the Order of the Storm confronted Kyuss, they came to the aid of one of these kingdoms, capturing Harrowdroth and transporting him to Tilagos for study. His hatred of Last Resort has only grown with each passing year, but the wild watchers have effectively kept him from causing too much destruction. He has resigned himself to a long wait here in the mountains, hoping some day that creatures capable of transporting him back to the Material Plane will come to his rescue. Of course, it remains to be seen if Harrowdroth's cruelty and rage will allow him the chance to speak to anything unfortunate enough to come across his lair.

Harrowdroth stands over 20 feet tall, with each of his four legs ending in terrible three-foot-long claws. His massive jaws brim with foot-long fangs flanked by tusks the size of cavalry lances. His body is splotched with patches of bony protrusions. By far his most fearsome aspect is his glowing red eyes, burning like signal lanterns in the dark of the cave, each easily the size of a human's head.

HARROWDROTH **CR 18**

Advanced elite nightmare beast
CE Huge magical beast
Monster Manual II 161

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, Listen +0, Spot +12

Language Abyssal

AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 24
hp 324 (24 HD); **DR** 15/magic
SR 20

Fort +22, **Ref** +16, **Will** +7

Spd 30 ft.

Melee* 2 tusks +28 (6d6+16/17–20) and 2 claws +26 (2d4+10/19–20) and bite +26 (4d6+10/19–20)

Base Atk +24; **Grp** +43

Special Atk nightmares, trample

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; +24 ranged touch) 2/day—*chain lightning* (DC 20), *cloudkill* (DC 19), *disintegrate* (DC 20), *dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 17), *heat metal* (DC 16), *incendiary cloud* (DC 22), *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *monster summoning V*

*Includes adjustments for 5-point Power Attack.

Abilities Str 32, Dex 14, Con 26, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 18

SQ augmented critical

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (tusk), Improved Natural Armor (4), Improved Natural Attack (tusk), Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Jump +26, Spot +12

Augmented Critical (Ex) A nightmare beast threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 19–20 with any of its natural weapons.

Nightmares (Su) Every intelligent creature that falls asleep within 10 miles of a nightmare beast must make a DC 26 Will save or suffer from horrid, vivid nightmares of being staked and killed

by monsters, demons, cruel enemies, etc. This is identical to a *nightmare* spell (CL 15th) except that casting *dispel evil* on the victim does not stun the nightmare beast. A successful *dispel magic* or *remove curse* negates the effect. Once a creature has saved successfully, it cannot be affected by Harrowdroth's nightmare power again for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based. Creatures with intelligence 2 or less are immune to this effect.

Trample (Ex) As a standard action during its turn each round, a nightmare beast can trample opponents at least one size category smaller than itself by making a running jump up to 35 feet away. This inflicts 4d6+16 points of bludgeoning damage. A trampled opponent can either attempt an attack of opportunity at a –4 penalty or a DC 33 Reflex save for half damage. The save DC is Strength-based.

Tactics: Harrowdroth waits for the PCs to come to him. The nightmare beast is aware of the wild watcher's trials, and has handled several adventurers in the past who were sent here by them. He waits until the PCs are about to emerge from the second steam cloud in his cavern before casting *incendiary cloud* on them. He continues to use his spell-like abilities on the PCs until they engage in melee. One of Harrowdroth's favorite tactics is to bull rush victims into the steam vent.

Treasure: Strewn about the far end of the cavern is a tangle of corpses. Among these slain adventurers, several magic items can be found, including a *+1 keen scythe*, a *rod of thunder and lightning*, a *lens of detection*, a *minor circlet of blasting*, and a pair of *winged boots*.

Fourth Trial: Nest of the Roc King (EL 16)

To complete the fourth trial, the PCs must procure a feather from an immense roc while the enormous bird lives.

The Nest of the Roc King lies at the top of Bloodfeather Peak. If the PCs lack the ability to fly, they face a harrowing climb up a rugged mountain. The mountain itself has an elevation of 10,000 feet, and the roc king's nest is at its peak. Climbing the mountain requires a series of six DC 20 Climb checks followed by four DC 30 Climb checks. Each check that fails by 5 or more results in a fall of 2d10×10 feet.

Unfortunately, Darl and his minions have already reached the roc king, plucked one of its feathers, and killed the magnificent creature. Upon reaching the nest, the PCs find the dead animal sprawled in a shallow lake of blood. The PCs can harvest as many feathers as they wish, but taken from the corpse they have no value in fulfilling the fourth trial.

There are two options available to the PCs now—they can either steal from Darl and his minions the feather they plucked from the roc's wing before they killed it, or they can resurrect the immense creature.

Creature: As the roc king's body is relatively intact and it was only killed a few days ago, a *raise dead* is sufficient to bring it back to life. The intimidating animal has a wingspan of 200 feet, and is immediately hostile upon being brought back to life, not comprehending that the PCs aren't the ones that killed it. A quick wild empathy check (rushed and with a –10 penalty as a result) can calm the roc, but unless it is made at least friendly (a DC 40 check) it refuses to let characters pluck a feather from its body, attacking them if they try to do so. If a PC can communicate freely with the roc, he can use Diplomacy to try to adjust the creature's attitude again. If the PCs volunteer to slay the ones who killed the roc earlier, the roc agrees to give them one of his feathers in thanks when they return from the task. Of course, the roc has a poor Sense Motive check, so the PCs can probably Bluff him into believing that they've already done this task if they try.

If the PCs are forced to fight the roc, they can pluck a feather from its living body by making a touch attack against the creature. This provokes an attack of opportunity. If successful, the character must then either make a DC 26 Strength check to pluck the feather, or he must inflict at least 15 points of damage on the feather with a slashing attack to cut it loose.

Roc King **CR 16**

Advanced roc
N Colossal animal
Monster Manual 215
Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +12, Spot +37

AC 26, touch 7, flat-footed 21
hp 486 (36 HD)
Fort +31, **Ref** +27, **Will** +14

Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)
Melee 2 talons +35 (3d6+16) and bite +30 (3d8+8)
Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.
Base Atk +27; **Grp** +59
Atk Options Flyby Attack, Snatch

Abilities Str 42, Dex 20, Con 28, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 11
Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Natural Armor (5), Iron Will, Multiattack, Snatch, Wingover
Skills Listen +12, Spot +37

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs manage to secure a living feather from the roc without killing it (or without being forced to raise it from the dead in the first place), award them XP as if they had defeated the roc king in combat.

Hand of the Lich-Lord (EL 20)

At some point during this adventure, the PCs cross paths with Darl Quethos and his surviving minions. You can stage this encounter at any time. If you want to throw a challenge at the PCs immediately, you can have him confront the PCs as they are traveling to their first trial. If your PCs are having a relatively easy time on Tilagos, you can have this group encounter them immediately after they complete one of the trials, forcing them to deal with Darl and his followers while their resources are depleted. Perhaps the PCs take the fight to them, using divination magic to determine the location of their campsite in an attempt to take the roc king's feather or confront them for other reasons. Together, the group is an EL 20 encounter, so chances are strong that it'll take the PCs multiple attempts and strikes against Darl and his minions before they can defeat them—assuming, of course, that the PCs opt for a combat solution to the competition.

Creatures: Darl is a ruthless mastermind, and one of the most powerful clerics in Vecna's service today. He hears the whispers of monarchs, and entreats with countless fiends, trading arcane secrets with them as bards trade hearth tales. There is little the cleric does not know. Over a year ago, Darl had a vision in which his dark god revealed to him the location of one his most treasured relics, the *Hand of Vecna*. After retrieving the artifact, Darl easily established himself as the leader of the Disciples of Darkness, a cult devoted to Vecna originally led by a sorcerer named Yelgin Naaros. Yelgin had claimed to possess the *Hand and Eye of Vecna*, but these were in fact a pair of undead grafts he'd earned in the service of a powerful lich. After exposing their leader's fraud and subsequently murdering him, Darl took the Disciples of Darkness as his personal entourage. The group consisted of six dangerous individuals, one of whom (a minotaur) was recently killed by the titan Krathanos. Another of Darl's minions, the kenku Krekie, may have followed the PCs into Last Resort from the Material Plane; if she joins this group, the encounter pushes EL 21.

Darl seeks the knowledge of the *Fountain of Dreams* simply because it represents secrets he (and thus his faith) do not know. By learning these secrets, Darl hopes Vecna will reward him with another vision—this one revealing the location of the *Eye of Vecna*. Sharing the secrets of the *Fountain* with others (like the PCs, or even his own minions) is not an option for the cleric. He intends to see to the *Fountain's* destruction as soon as he learns what he can from it. Being forced to undertake the four trials of the wild watchers has left Darl in a foul mood; these conflicts have proven difficult even for him and his group of powerful minions. He's managed to secure the roc king's feather, and has spent the last few days in quiet contemplation, casting divination spells in an attempt to plan his next steps.

Since he noticed the scrying attempt several days ago, Darl has also learned about the characters and their quest to secure the knowledge of Last Resort for their own, thanks primarily to *commune* spells. He may attempt to scry upon the PCs at many points during this adventure, and once they arrive in Last Resort he certainly does so. Indeed, Darl already knows quite a lot about the PCs; they've become great heroes, and their deeds and rapid rise in power have not gone unnoticed by him. Their successes against the Ebon Triad have actually pleased Darl, who views this cult of

heretics as one of the greatest insults to Vecna's glory. He knows the PCs are potent foes, and uses what he knows of them to his advantage.

Darl's remaining minions (not including Krekie) are Malhazar the efreeti caliph, Nalhazzarath the cornugon, and the tiefling twins Jalagar and Sabir.

Malhazar, a powerful efreeti caliph who has long sought to wrestle control of the Elemental Plane of Fire from the Sultan, is rarely encountered without his fierce cauchemar mount. His scheming earned him banishment from his home plane, and he has since fallen in with the cult, allying himself with Vecna in an attempt to learn some way to end his forced exile.

Nalhazzarath's true name has long been passed between conjurers of great power, and the devil has suffered constant servitude as a result, impeding his rise through the echelons of the Nine Hells. The devil has thrown his lot in with the Vecnan cultists in an attempt to discover a means to obscure his name from conjurers forever. Unfortunately for him, Darl knows his true name and intends on using this knowledge at a later date to ensure Nalhazzarath's eternal servitude.

Jalagar and Sabir Sinfire are twin brothers who grew into their impressive skills as members of a remote Scarlet Brotherhood monastery. Once they felt they had learned all they could from their sinister masters, the tieflings murdered the monks of the monastery, gathered their wealth, and used this wealth to finance several weeks of debauchery. Their celebrations ended when they were nearly slain by Scarlet Brotherhood assassins. Since then, they've been on the run from the Brotherhood, and fell in with the Vecnan cult to seek protection from their enemies.

Darl Quethos **CR 18**

Male human cleric 18 (Vecna)
NE Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., see invisible and ethereal 120 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +19
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22
hp 117 (131 with *heroes' feast*) (18 HD)
Immune alignment detection, *detect thoughts, discern lies*, fear, flanking, poison
Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +21

Spd 30 ft.
Melee +4 *heavy mace* +14/+9/+4 (1d8+4) and *Hand of Vecna* +5 touch (1d10 cold plus possible ability score drain) or *Hand of Vecna* +13/+8/+3 touch (1d10 cold plus possible ability score drain)
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +13
Special Atk rebuke undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+20 HD)
Combat Gear *wand of cure serious wounds* (35 charges), *wand of stoneskin* (10 charges), *wand of restoration* (18 charges), *wand of charm monster* (22 charges)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 18th, +13 ranged touch, +22 to overcome SR)
9th—*foresight*[D], *implosion* (DC 28), quickened *plane shift* (DC 24), *mass heal*
8th—quickened *death ward*, quickened *cure critical wounds, greater spell immunity, mass cure critical wounds, protection from spells*[D]
7th—quickened *cure serious wounds, destruction* (DC 26), extended *heroes' feast**, *repulsion* (DC 26), *spell turning*[D]
6th—quickened *cure moderate wounds, find the path*[D], *greater dispel magic, harm* (DC 25), *heal, wind walk*
5th—quickened *cure light wounds, flame strike* (2, DC 24), extended *divine power, scrying* (DC 24), *spell resistance, true seeing*[D]
4th—*cure critical wounds, death ward, discern lies*[D] (DC 23), *freedom of movement, greater magic weapon**, *sending, spell immunity, tongues*
3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*[D], *cure serious wounds* (2), *invisibility purge, magic vestment** (2), *meld into stone, protection from energy* (2)
2nd—*bear's endurance, cure moderate wounds* (3), *detect thoughts*[D] (DC 21), *owl's wisdom, silence* (2)
1st—*comprehend languages, cure light wounds* (4), *detect secret doors*[D], *entropic shield, protection from good, sanctuary* (DC 20)
0—*detect magic* (2), *light, purify food and drink, read magic* (2)
D domain spell; **Domains** Knowledge, Magic
*Already cast; effects are incorporated into stats

Abilities Str 11, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 28, Cha 17 (all of Darl's abilities have a +3 inherent bonus)
SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)
Feats Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Spell Penetration
Skills Concentration +17, Diplomacy +13, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (religion) +24, Search +13, Spellcraft +20, Spot +19
Possessions combat gear, *Hand of Vecna, +1 heavy mace, +1 animated heavy steel shield; +6 periapt of Wisdom, robe of eyes, ring of protection +2, ring of mind shielding*

Malhazar, The Exiled Flame **CR 17**

Male efreeti aristocrat 3/fighter 8
NE Large outsider (extraplanar, fire)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17
Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25
hp 165 (178 with *heroes' feast*, 21 HD)
Immune fear, fire, poison
Fort +17, **Ref** +14, **Will** +17
Weakness vulnerable to cold

Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect)
Melee +2 *flaming burst falchion* +32/+27/+22/+17 (2d6+18 plus 2d6 fire/15–20)
Base Atk +20; **Grp** +32
Atk Options Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, heat
Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (3)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th, CL 13th for *plane shift*, +23 ranged touch)
At will—*detect magic, plane shift* (to elemental planes, Astral, or Material plane, DC 19), *produce flame, pyrotechnics* (DC 16), *scorching ray* (1 ray only)
3/day—*invisibility, quickened scorching ray* (1 ray only), *wall of fire* (DC 18)
2/day—*change size* (DC 15)
1/day—grant up to three *wishes* (to non-genies only), *gaseous form, permanent image* (DC 20), *polymorph* (self only)

Abilities Str 27, Dex 18, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 18
Feats Combat Reflexes, Greater Weapon Focus (falchion), Greater Weapon Specialization (falchion), Improved

Critical (falchion), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*scorching ray*), Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (falchion), Weapon Specialization (falchion)

Skills Bluff +20, Concentration +16, Diplomacy +21, Intimidate +30, Listen +17, Move Silently +16, Ride +20, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +14, Spot +17

Possessions combat gear, *+3 chain shirt*, *+2 flaming burst falchion*, *amulet of natural armor* +3, ornate brass bracelets and anklets studded with fire opals (6 total, each worth 2,000 gp each), brilliant white and red cloak made from enameled dragon scales (worth 4,000 gp)

JALAGAR AND SABIR SINFIRE **CR 15**

Male tiefling monk 15

NE outsider (native)

Monster Manual 209

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +21, Spot +12

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin, Infernal, Kenku

AC 22, touch 22, flat-footed 16

hp 97 (110 with *heroes' feast*) (15 HD)

Immune fear, non-supernatural disease, poison

Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5; **SR** 25

Fort +11, **Ref** +15, **Will** +11 (+13 vs. enchantment); improved evasion

Spd 70 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +21/+21/+21/+16/+11 (2d6+4)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Improved Disarm, Stunning Fist (15/day, DC 18)

Special Atk quivering palm (DC 18)

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +4

Spell-Like Ability (CL 15th)

1/day—*darkness*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ abundant step 1/day, *ki* strike (lawful magic), slow fall 70 ft., wholeness of body (30 hp/day)

Feats Acrobatic, Alertness, Deflect Arrows, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Snatch Arrows, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +17, Bluff +0, Hide +17, Jump +40, Listen +21, Move Silently +15, Spot +12, Tumble +28

Possessions combat gear, *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *ring of protection* +2, *boots of speed*, *gloves of Dexterity* +4

Black Fire, cauchemar: hp 172; *heroes' feast* in effect; *Monster Manual* 194.

Nalhazzarath, male cornugon devil: hp 172; *heroes' feast* in effect; *Monster Manual* 55.

Tactics: Darl knows the PC's standard tactics and capabilities quite well, and uses this knowledge when confronting the PCs by revealing his knowledge of their darkest secrets, inner desires, childhood memories, embarrassing misdeeds, and of course their dour weaknesses. His first action when he knows combat is near is to use a charge from his *wand of stoneskin*. Given time before a battle, he employs *greater spell immunity* and *spell immunity*, choosing spells the PCs favor in combat, as well as *spell resistance*, *protection from spells* and *spell turning*. Darl knows his primary weakness is his Armor Class, and tries to avoid getting in situations where enemies can reach him in melee or utilize ranged weapons against him. He's fond of casting *silence* on Jalagar and Sabir so they can harry spellcasters and disrupt communication. Once combat begins, Darl uses his ranged spells and quickened defensive spells as appropriate. He's not afraid to catch his allies in the area of effect of his fire spells, since they are difficult to harm with such attacks.

The Sinfire twins' job in the battle is to keep Darl safe and destroy enemy spellcasters. They employ stunning fists against opponents threatening their master and use Tumble at opportune moments to gain strategic advantage or to hasten to Darl's side if he is in danger.

Malhazar prefers to fight while mounted on Black Fire, making full use of his mounted combat feats. The first three rounds the efreeti fires quickened *scorching rays* at anyone who seems particularly vulnerable to fire (selecting wizards and others with low hit points if no one seems particularly vulnerable). If things begin to sour, he begins to grant *wishes* to Darl or the Sinfire twins to return fallen allies from death or to heal them from multiple debilitating effects. He doesn't trust Nalhazzarath enough to allow the devil access to his *wishes*.

Nalhazzarath uses Improved Sunder to destroy any particularly dangerous weapons (especially holy weapons) in battle. If possible he concentrates his attacks on a cleric or other healer first, hoping to slay them and then inflict infernal wounds

The Hand of Vecna

If the PCs manage to slay Darl, they'll have gained one of the most notorious D&D artifacts of all time—the *Hand of Vecna*. The powers of this evil artifact are detailed on page 281 of the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide*. While the powers granted by the Hand of Vecna are potent, they won't necessarily "break the game." Allowing one of the PCs to keep and use this artifact by no means gives that PC a free ride to the end of the Age of Worms.

What could cause problems is that once word gets out that a PC owns the *Hand of Vecna* (and word certainly gets out if he ever uses it in a public place, or if any of his victims escape his clutches), you should have that character harried weekly by bounty hunters, greedy wizards, outraged paladins, minions of Vecna, Warduke (DUNGEON #105), or any number of other powerful individuals or organizations bent on claiming the *Hand* for their own use. Finally, remember that possession of the *Hand* eventually turns its owner evil—this alignment change can have long-lasting effects on the character and his allies.

In the end, it's probably best for the PCs to dispose of the *Hand of Vecna*. If they're trusting types, the best thing to do would be to hand it over to Manzorian. Other patrons are either not powerful enough to keep it from the clutches of the enemy, or secretly are the enemy (such as Lashonna, who makes a bid to claim the *Hand* as soon as she gets a chance as long as she can do so without revealing her allegiance to Kyuss). Disposing of the *Hand of Vecna* by throwing it into the sea, the Astral Plane, or elsewhere is a temproary solution; it will certainly turn up again in the near future. An attempt to actually destroy the *Hand of Vecna* should be an adventure in and of itself; check out pages 282–284 of the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide II* for advice on how artifacts can be destroyed.

on the rest of the party with his tail. If the battle seems to be going downhill, the devil attempts to summon another cornugon to the fray. Nalhazzarath takes great delight in forcing other devils to appear at his beck and call, the way spellcasters often do to him.

Development: Chances are good that Darl and the others can escape back to the Material Plane if things go bad. In this event, they do not return to Last Resort, and give up the *Fountain of Dreams* as a lost cause. Darl does not forget the PCs, though, and he can return numerous times during the remainder of the campaign to torment them, perhaps even paying a visit to their homes while they're gone to engage in a little sabotage, vandalism, abduction, or worse.

PART FOUR: THE FOUNTAIN OF DREAMS

With the four trials accomplished, the PCs can return to the Portal of Storms at the island's center where they first met the wild watchers. If they haven't yet encountered and confronted Darl and his minions, they should do so before they reach the portal.

Upon arriving back at the Portal of Storms after completing the four trials, the party finds the wild watchers waiting for them—if they return early, the wild watchers are nowhere to be found. The wild watchers already seem to know that the PCs have endured the four trials, and Tylanthros, Beskawahn, and Thadimar are pleased. Sayren-Lei is not. While the other three fey congratulate the PCs on their accomplishment, Sayren-Lei explodes into rage.

"You have proved nothing, slaughtering beasts and Vecna-worshipping dogs. Worse, you allowed the Roc King to perish! The trial asked specifically for his living feather, yet he was nonetheless killed! You are no heroes and I declare that none of you shall taste the waters of the Fountain of Dreams. I contest your doubtful accomplishment, and demand trial by blood. Only if you pathetic mortals can defeat me shall I consider you worthy of the final secrets of the Order of the Storm!"

Sayren-Lei's rage stems only partially from the death of the Roc King; of the four wild watchers, he is the only one who secretly wants the lore of the druids to remain hidden. Tylanthros sighs at his outburst, but informs the PCs that Sayren-Lei does indeed have the right to make such a challenge. The PCs can try to talk Sayren-Lei out of his rage with a DC 50 Diplomacy check to adjust his attitude from hostile to helpful. If the PCs point out that they weren't the ones who killed the Roc King, they receive a +2 bonus on this Diplomacy check. If they actually resurrected the Roc King, they receive a +10 bonus on the check, but only if the Roc King still lives.

Otherwise, the other three wild watchers step back to a respectable distance of a few hundred feet to observe the battle between the PCs and Sayren-Lei. There are no rules to this battle, which begins in the open field surrounding the Portal of Storms but can lead anywhere.

Sayren-Lei, wild watcher: hp 325; See Appendix.

Development: If the PCs bring Sayren-Lei below 30 hp, he yields to them. The fey is genuinely impressed with their skill and humbly apologizes, regretting the disparaging remarks he hurled at them. If not slain by the party, he grants his elemental banners (using his gift of the watcher ability) to them in thanks as a way to atone for his outburst. See the Appendix for the powers granted by this gift. If he is slain, the other three wild watchers seem disappointed but take no further actions against the PCs.

After the dust settles, whether Sayren-Lei was spared or not, the wild watchers return to the group. Tylanthros gestures silently to the Portal of Storms, and the obsidian platform shimmers and transforms into a remarkable obsidian fountain, its waters cool and sparkling with a rainbow of scintillating light. As the fountain manifests, all of the PCs experience a nearly overwhelming rush of nostalgia for things they've cherished in their childhood and a strange gnawing fear of long-forgotten nightmares.

As they gaze at the fountain, Tylanthros speaks one final time.

"And so you have earned the right to return the lore of the Order of Storms to the world. The Age of Worms is upon us, and what the powers of old began so long ago now falls to you to complete. Drink deep and remember. Dream the dreams of the ages."

Descent into Dream (EL 20)

The *Fountain of Dreams* is more than a mere receptacle of knowledge. It provides a strange, tenuous link with the past, with the spirits of the final surviving druids of the Order (as manifested in the forms of the wild watchers), and with the very nature of the demiplane of Last Resort. Only one PC need drink from the waters; as soon as he does, all members of the group become overwhelmed by the sudden rush of alien yet strangely familiar memories. The world around them swirls away into a vortex of lightning and wind, fire and rain, ending in the utter darkness of nothingness. For several moments, they float adrift in this silence, yet it is still long enough to feel the cold perpetuity of the infinite weighing upon them.

Suddenly, the PCs realize they're standing on a windy bluff overlooking an immense canyon. A DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check is enough to recognize the canyon as the Rift Canyon 150 miles north of Alhaster, although it seems somehow less barren than expected. Trees grow right up to the canyon's rim, and far to the south, the faint, looming specter of White Plume Mountain is visible. Then the din of distant battle finds the PCs' ears, and as if rising from the ground on ledges and mesas both near and far, armies of creatures fade into view. In the distance, cities smoke in ruin, and the sky is cast with a dark pallor. The cacophonous moans of the undead ride the wind. Although their immediate vicinity remains clear for now, the PCs can see that the armies consist of huge numbers of humanoids fighting against what seems like an endless wave of undead. Some of these undead should seem familiar, for these are the armies of Kyuss rising up from the Rift Canyon in an attempt to

ruin the lands of humanity. Creatures the PCs have fought before are here in legions—spawn of Kyuss of all shapes and sizes, wormcallers, morhgs, eviscerator beetles, overworms, and ulgurstastas. Yet there are other, stranger creatures as well, like enormous worm-dripping centipedes who cause the ground they walk on to boil, immense black scorpions whose mere presence seems to turn the living on their allies, and horrific worm-like dragons who breathe out swaths of writhing green Kyuss worm swarms. And wheeling in the distant skies above, attended by numerous smaller dragons, is a horrifying shape—a skeletal red dragon of great size. Dragotha. For all of the humanoids' numbers, it should be obvious that they fight a losing battle.

At this point, inform the PCs that all their wounds and afflictions are healed (as if each person received a *heal* spell) and all spells and abilities that have limited uses per day have been recharged. Allow spellcasters who prepare spells the time to do so. There isn't any time to cast preparatory spells, however, before a voice rings out behind them: "You have arrived."

A small group of somber druids stands before the PCs. A DC 15 Spot check is enough for the PCs to recognize the four druids at the forefront of this group of several dozen, for they are the druids destined to become the four wild watchers. The man who addressed them is the living Tylanthros, his face gaunt with hardship, and his robes matted with blood. Despite his greeting, he gives no indication that he recognizes the PCs for who they are, for it will be 1,500 years before he meets them again on Tilagos Island. As he approaches the heroes, he speaks.

"The heroes of prophecy. Your timing is perfect. We can hold them no longer, but we have been successful in our task." The man indicates the dozen or so druids who stand behind him. These druids cluster around a large package, a strange container with its sides carved in the shapes of leering demonic and draconic faces. "Dragotha's phylactery is ours, yet at a great price. His minions even now come for us to reclaim it, and soon he himself shall learn of its theft. We must hide it forever from his reach, for I fear its destruction at this juncture would only drive him to an unstoppable frenzy. But if we can take it from this land, he will sense its loss. He will abandon the army of Kyuss and they will be lost, without leadership. You must hold off the spawn that even now scramble at the edges of the cliffs around us. Our trusted ally will stall his aerial forces while you must hold off the rest of his spawn long enough for us to transport the phylactery."

As the druid mentions an ally, a familiar figure steps forward, a young and vivacious woman dressed in ornate silver armor who can be none other than Lashonna, her eyes bright and burning with determination. She speaks to you, but there is no sense of recognition in her eyes. "I shall engage Dragotha and his children myself, but I cannot defend against his Swords. They come too, scrambling up to our location even now, along with—something else. Something most unnatural—an abomination. You must hold them off, for all is lost if you fail."

With that final pronouncement, Lashonna spreads wide her arms and transforms into a magnificent silver dragon. With a single tremendous beat of her wings, she launches into the air and soars off toward the distant dracolich. As she wings away, Tylanthros speaks again. "We go now, to hide the phylactery within its cradle in Kongen-Thulnir. Save us from the Swords of Kyuss, or the Age of Worms shall doom us all!"

Even as the PCs attempt to drink all this in, the undead reach the edge of their mesa, scuttling up over the rim of the cliff's edge to howl in triumph. The druids retreat to protect the phylac-

tery and ready its transport to the vault they've prepared in their stronghold city of Kongen-Thulnir as the undead surge forth in a rotten wave to assault the PCs.

Creatures: The advance scouts of Dragotha's forces are potent undead soldiers known as the Swords of Kyuss; the PCs likely fought some of these in "The Spire of Long Shadows," but not in the numbers they are about to face. The first wave of undead soldiers consists of ten Swords of Kyuss. The undead ignore the druids and focus their wrath on the PCs, although you should describe the battle in terms that make it seem like if the PCs weren't present, they would fall upon the wounded druids with a vengeance.

The PCs have only four rounds to deal with the initial wave of ten Swords of Kyuss before a second group of ten clambers up over the edge. One round after this second wave of undead arrives, a horrific undead menace rises up over the edge to join the fight—a creature called a boneyard. This snake-like monster has a body made of thousands of bones, with a head fashioned from an immense dragon's skull. If the PCs manage to defeat the boneyard and this second wave of swords of Kyuss, they have managed to hold off the armies of Kyuss long enough for the druids to transport the phylactery to its vault.

Swords of Kyuss (20) **CR 10**

Always CE Medium Undead

Dungeon #130

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +19, Spot +19

Languages Abyssal, Flan (or a similar ancient language from your campaign)

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 25

hp 133 (14 HD); **DR** 10/silver

Immune cold, electricity; undead traits

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +11

Spd 20 ft. in armor (30 ft. base)

Melee* wormblade +20/+15 melee (2d6+24 plus 1d6 acid/19–20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +16

Atk Options Power Attack

Special Atk invocation of the worm

*Includes adjustment for 5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 28, Dex 12, Con —, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ martial calling, turn resistance +2, unholy toughness

Feats Ability Focus (invocation), Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Intimidate +20, Knowledge (religion) +18, Listen +19, Sense Motive +19, Spot +19

Possessions *+1 full plate* and masterwork greatsword

Invocation of the Worm (Su) Three times per day, a sword of Kyuss can unleash a blast of negative energy. The blast fills a 20-foot-radius spread anywhere within a range of 100 feet + 10 feet per HD of the sword of Kyuss. The blast deals 1d6 points of damage per Hit Die possessed by the sword of Kyuss (maximum 20d6). The blast of a typical sword has a range of 240 ft. and inflicts 14d6 damage. Living creatures caught in the blast can make a Reflex save (DC 22) for half damage. Undead in the blast are instead healed of damage equal to the amount inflicted. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Martial Calling (Su) A sword of Kyuss gains a profane bonus equal to half its Hit Dice on all melee weapon attacks.

Unholy Toughness (Ex) A sword of Kyuss gains a bonus to its hit points equal to its Charisma modifier times its Hit Dice.

Wormblade (Su) Each sword of Kyuss carries a masterwork greatsword. Their unholy energies infuse this greatsword, transforming it into a +1 *greatsword* that inflicts an additional 1d6 points of acid damage on a hit, as long as the sword of Kyuss wields the greatsword. It is said that each death caused by a wormblade adds to Kyuss' tally of souls, increasing his power and drawing the dreaded Age of Worms closer to its fulfillment.

BONEYARD OF KYUSS **CR 17**

Advanced boneyard
CE Gargantuan undead
Libris Mortis 89
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +38, Spot +38
Languages Abyssal, Common, Terran

AC 32, touch 8, flat-footed 30; Dodge, Mobility
hp 225 (30 HD); fast healing 10; **DR** 10/—
Immune cold; undead traits
SR 24
Fort +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +22

Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
Melee bite +26 (3d8+21/19–20 plus bone subsumption)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +41
Atk Options Spring Attack, improved grab (bite), utter subsumption
Special Atk summon skeletons

Abilities Str 39, Dex 14, Con —, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 18
SQ inescapable craving
Feats Ability Focus (bone subsumption), Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness (grants an additional hit point per hit die), Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Balance +35, Climb +47, Hide +23, Jump +41, Listen +38, Move Silently +35, Search +37, Spot +38

Bone Subsumption (Su) Whenever a boneyard damages a creature with its bite, the victim must make a DC 31 Fortitude save (undead instead must make a Will save). On a failed save, the victim's bones melt away to meld with the boneyard's body, inflicting 2d4 points of damage to Constitution, Dexterity, and Strength. This ability only works on creatures with a skeletal structure. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Inescapable Craving (Ex) A boneyard must eat bones each day, otherwise it must make a DC 25 Will save to avoid suffering 1d6 Wisdom damage.

Summon Skeletons (Su) A boneyard can summon 1d4+2 troll skeletons or 1d3+1 young adult red dragon skeletons once per day. The undead arrive in 1d10 rounds and serve for 1 hour before they are reabsorbed.

Utter Subsumption (Su) If a boneyard wins a grapple check after using its improved grab ability, it attempts to pin the target on its next action. A boneyard that begins a turn with a pinned victim that makes one more successful grapple check automatically tears every bone from the victim's body, instantly killing the victim.

Young Adult Red Dragon Skeletons (1d3+1): hp 123 each; *Monster Manual* 227.

Tactics: Each group of ten swords of Kyuss splits into groups of five when they attack. Five engage the PCs in melee for three rounds while the remaining five pelt them with invocations of the worm, healing their undead allies while damaging the PCs. After three rounds, the swords change position. After six rounds, all remaining swords in the group close to finish off the PCs in melee.

The boneyard's arrival adds a dangerous element to the battle. Its first action in combat is to summon 1d3+1 red dragon skeletons to aid it in battle; these skeletons begin writhing and clambering from its body, joining combat 1d10 rounds later. The boneyard tries to remain at least 20 feet from the PCs, using its reach to attack them and allowing the swords room to continue to fight as well.

Development: Don't be afraid to pull out the stops in this battle. The purpose of this encounter is to inform the PCs that Dragotha's phylactery is hidden

Scaling the Adventure

"The Library of Last Resort" is designed for a party of four 16th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 14th–15th-level or 17th–18th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 16. Don't forget to modify the amount of treasure found in the adventure appropriately. Specific changes to the adventure include:

14th–15th-level characters: Replace the octopus tree with a 20 HD Gargantuan Chuul. Remove 2–3 ropers from area **M3.** Reduce the girallon behemoths and Tilagos bulettes by 3–6 Hit Dice, or make them Huge instead of Gargantuan. Replace the night twist with a half-fiend treant bard 12. Reduce Harrowdroth by 3–6 Hit Dice. Remove Jalagar and/or Sabir Sinfire from Darl's band. Reduce the number of Swords of Kyuss the PCs fight in part four to two groups of 6 or 8.

16th–17th-level characters: Advance the octopus tree and ropers by 4–8 Hit Dice. Advance the girallon behemoth and Tilagos bulette by 3–6 Hit Dice. Give Krathanos a few levels of barbarian. Add 2–3 16 Hit Die half-fiend treants to the night twist's glade. Advance Harrowdroth by 3–6 Hit Dice. Give Darl a nightcrawler or nightwalker minion. Add a mature adult blue dragon or two to the last battle (keeping in mind that swords of Kyuss are immune to electrical damage).

in Kongen-Thulnir; since the druids impart this knowledge to the PCs just before their fight (but after Lashonna leaves—had she waited just a few seconds more before leaving to battle Dragotha and overheard the location at which the phylactery was to be hidden, events in the future would have played out quite differently indeed), the actual outcome of the PCs' battle with the undead is secondary. Even if the PCs are "killed," they don't really die since this is really little more than a powerful vision. In fact, if the PCs are defeated by the undead, they should be even more concerned with what could happen to their world if the Age of Worms begins.

During this battle, make sure to describe Lashonna's battle against Dragotha and his minions in the distant skies. Just as the PCs are about to finish their own fight (victoriously or otherwise), they see Dragotha deliver a killing blow to Lashonna, whose body falls from the sky to be lost in the mists of the Rift Canyon below.

In any event, once the battle is over (one way or another), the PCs experience another gut-wrenching vortex as they return to Tilagos Island. Again, their wounds are healed and their spells restored (dead PCs are restored to life without loss of experience levels, as if by *true resurrection*). Yet the Tilagos Island they've returned to is markedly different than the one from which they left.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Do not award experience normally for this encounter. If the PCs defeat all of the undead, grant them a CR 20 experiance award. If they fall in battle, grant them a CR 15 story award for learning the location of Dragotha's phylactery.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After awakening from the "vision" induced by the *Fountain of Dreams*, the PCs are armed with the information needed to begin the tenth installment of the Age of Worms Adventure Path—they know that Dragotha's phylactery is hidden in a place called Kongen-Thulnir. Yet Tilagos Island, as they knew it, is no more. When they return from their vision, they do so to the Material Plane, standing on an uninteresting, barren island in the Nyr Dyv. The storms that surround the island are gone, and the barren rocks are covered with grass and a few copses of trees. The maze of menhirs down on the shore (and any of its surviving monsters) remains unchanged, but the Portal of Storms is weathered and ruined, as if it had lain inert for 1,500 years. In a way, it has; by activating the *Fountain of Dreams*, the PCs have restored the lost lore of the Order of the Storm to the world. In the weeks and months to come, sages and scholars around the world slowly rediscover some of this lost lore, which seems to have magically manifested from nothingness in old texts, dusty scrolls, and even new books, often incorporating this knowledge into the flow of the text as if it had always been there. Some of this knowledge is retained by the PCs, and in DRAGON #342's Wormfood article, several magic items that they can research and create based on this lore are presented in detail.

Unfortunately, the return of this lore to the world also makes it possible for Dragotha and his minions to learn the location of his phylactery. This discovery occurs soon, but not until the PCs begin the next adventure: "Kings of the Rift." Until then, they have earned a chance for rest and recovery. Once they begin "Kings of the Rift," such opportunities may become little more than cherished memories, for the Age of Worms is truly at hand.

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTER

Wild Watcher

This tall, gallant figure stands bedecked in glimmering gossamer armor, with a cloak of vicious nettles draped across his shoulders. A halo of churning insects swirls about his head. He wields a wicked barbed spear in both hands, and four poles fan out from the plates of armor across his upper back. Attached at the end of each pole is a banner, one fiery red fringed with bright crimson flames, another translucent white leaving a trail of cloud in its wake as it dances on the wind, a third deep brown and cracked like parched earth, and the last blue as the ocean on a cloudless day and frothing with bubbles.

WILD WATCHER **CR 19**

Always Neutral Medium Fey

Init +12; **Senses** low-light vision, true seeing; Listen +34, Spot +34

Aura swarm aura (10 ft., DC 32)

Languages Aquan, Auran, Common, Druidic, Ignan, Sylvan, Terran

AC 38, touch 22, flat-footed 26 (+12 Dex, +16 natural)

hp 325 (26 HD); fast healing 10; **DR** 15/cold iron and magic

Immune fear, poison

Resist acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, fire 30

SR 30

Fort +17, **Ref** +27, **Will** +20

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +5 *shocking burst spear* +27/+22/+17 (1d8+17 plus 1d6 electricity/19–20/x3)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +21

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip

Special Atk elemental standards

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th, +25 ranged touch)

At will—*baleful polymorph* (DC 23), *barkskin, gaseous form, greater dispel magic, greater invisibility, gust of wind, pass without trace, transport via plants, wall of thorns*

3/day—*quickened barkskin, quickened baleful polymorph* (DC 23), *fire shield, insect plague*

1/day—*call lightning storm* (DC 23), *commune with nature, creeping doom*

Abilities Str 27, Dex 34, Con 29, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 27

SQ gift of the watcher, summon spear, thorny cloak

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (spear), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*barkskin, baleful polymorph*), Track, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Bluff +37, Concentration +38, Diplomacy +41, Hide +41, Knowledge (nature) +36, Listen +34, Move Silently +41, Sense Motive +34, Spot +34, Survival +34, Tumble +41

Environment demiplane of Last Resort

Organization solitary or band (2–4)

Treasure +5 *shocking burst spear*

Advancement by character class

Elemental Standards (Su) Every wild watcher wears four elemental standards on his back, each one corresponding to one of the elements. Each banner grants a different benefit as long as the wild watcher wears it. The air banner grants electricity resistance 30 and the ability to cast a quickened *air walk* once per day as a spell-like ability. The fire banner grants fire resistance 30 and the ability to cast a quickened *flame strike* once per day as a spell-like ability. The water banner grants cold resistance 30 and the constant ability to breathe water. The earth banner grants acid resistance 30 and the ability to cast *stoneskin* once per day as a spell-like ability. Spell-like abilities function at caster level 19th.

Gift of the Watcher (Su) A wild watcher may grant any other creature one (or more) of its banners to be used by that creature in defense of the natural world.

Wild Watcher

The receiver of the banner must either hold it in hand or wear it on his back (in the cloak item slot) to gain its benefits. Only a wild watcher may wear multiple standards on its back. A watcher cannot be forced to grant its gift of the watcher through magical means, nor through intimidation, but if a watcher is caught in a bet or in a broken promise, he may begrudgingly yield up a banner. A gifted banner remains in the possession of the creature as long as the wild watcher wills it; he may reclaim the banner at any time as a free action, at which time the banner returns to the wild watcher across any distance. If the wild watcher is killed, the creature who gained the gift can keep the banner indefinitely, but if he tries to give it away or sell it, the banner is destroyed.

Summon Spear (Su) A watcher may summon a *+5 shocking burst spear* into its hands as an immediate action (a free action it can take once per round even when it's not its turn). This spear is real as long as it remains in contact with the wild watcher; the instant he releases it, it vanishes. A wild watcher's spear can be used to make disarm or trip attacks, but grants no additional bonus on these checks.

Swarm Aura (Su) A wild watcher is constantly surrounded by a swarm of flying vermin. Anyone within 10 feet of a wild watcher must make a DC 32 Fortitude save to avoid becoming nauseated for 1 round. All creatures who begin their turn within 10 feet of a wild watcher take 3d6 points of damage from being exposed to the biting and stinging insects. A wild watcher is immune to swarm damage, and can move through swarms without fear of being harmed or distracted. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Thorny Cloak (Ex) The cloak of woven thorns, briars, and nettles that surrounds a wild watcher possesses a life of its own and serves the watcher diligently at all times. Any creature making a melee attack against the watcher is automatically subjected to a disarm attempt by the wild watcher. In addition, the thorny cloak snatches arrows and other small projectiles and thrown weapons out of the air, launching them back at the attacker. The cloak makes disarm attempts and ranged attacks using the wild watcher's melee and ranged attack bonuses. It can attempt a disarm or return fire a captured ranged weapon attack only once per character per round, always attempting to do so on that character's first attack.

True Seeing (Su) The wild watcher is continuously under the effect of *true seeing*. This effect cannot be dispelled.

Wild watchers were once the final surviving members of the druidic Order of the Storm; they transformed into their new, fey incarnation when they worked their last great magic to remove Tilagos Island from the Material Plane, becoming the deathless guardians of the resulting demiplane of Last Resort.

Wild watchers are dangerous foes who know no fear and never hesitate to oppose their enemies or anyone threatening Last Resort. The strange armor they wear is in fact their exterior flesh, and flows with unnatural grace and ease as they move. Wild watchers are brilliant tacticians and skilled warriors who seek to divide their enemies' resources in battle in order to easily best them. Against weaker foes, a wild watcher enjoys humiliating encroachers rather than killing them, sending them off alive to spread a message of warning to other would-be violators of the watcher's domain.

In melee, wild watchers lash out with their long spears, using Improved Trip to topple foes and run them through. Against ranged foes they rely upon their dangerous array of spell-like abilities. If faced with particularly dangerous enemies, a wild watcher makes full use of Combat Expertise to increase its Armor Class.

Nicolas Logue is a Monk 5/Thespian 5/Freelance Writer 5 based on the wild island of Oahu. He would like to level up in a prestige class next. Gainful Employee would be nice, but he is not sure he meets the prerequisites. In the meantime Nicolas amuses himself with performing Jingju, choreographing stage combat, and teaching acting classes at the University of Hawai'i.

Mt.Zogon
MUSHROOM! I INHALED A STRANGE RED MOLD INTO MY LUNGS AND NOW I NO LONGER HAVE TO BREATHE! THE SPORES SOMEHOW DO IT FOR ME!
GOODNESS!
FINALLY - FINALLY - FINALLY I CAN SLEEP WHERE I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SLEEP FOR MONTHS!
THAT'S WONDERFUL.
WELL... I'M SLEEPY. GOOD NIGHT, MUSHROOM.
SWEET DREAMS, GALEENA.
BY TONY MOSELEY
ZOGONIA.COM

THE INTRODUCTORY SESSION

SPECIAL SESSIONS (PART 1)

BY MONTE COOK
BY KYLE HUNTER

There are many types of special sessions. First (and perhaps foremost) is the Introductory Session. This is the game session where everyone first sits down at the table to play together. It's important because it sets the stage and the mood for the entire campaign. A good first session gets everyone excited for the rest of the campaign.

The Character Creation Session

Some groups require that all the players come to the first session with characters in hand, fully created and equipped, with backgrounds all sketched out, motivations readied, and personality defined. In other words, they're ready to roll initiative from the start. Not everyone is so well prepared ahead of time.

It's not, however, just a matter of preparedness. Some groups find that having everyone show up at the table as a blank slate is a valuable thing. One advantage is that it builds instant camaraderie. Everyone starts at the same time, together, so it feels like there's a bond there, albeit a simple one. A player is far less likely

to create a loner character or one that doesn't fit in with the others if he's creating it right there with everyone else.

This session is the opportunity for the players to discuss who will play what character and what role each can fill. Or maybe, as a group, they decide to do something different, and they all create sorcerers. Whatever the end result, it's the decision of the players acting as a group.

What does the DM do during such a session? Well, in some ways, this is an evening (or afternoon, or whatever) of light responsibilities for the Dungeon Master. The DM is there to answer questions, either about rules, house rules, or the setting. A character might ask, "I want to play a ninja, is that OK in this setting?" The DM can answer yes or no. Really, though, the DM should probably do his best in this session to back off. Let the players create their characters and forge their bonds.

The One-on-One Approach

One approach that I've tried a few times with great success is to start out a new campaign with a one-on-one session with each player. Usually, these sessions are short, and may require some special scheduling. You could perhaps do two on a regular game night, for example, so that after two such sessions you've had your intro with all four players and on the third session everyone can come together.

These individual sessions can include a brief combat encounter, a roleplaying encounter, an overcoming obstacles encounter, or some of each. They can be tailored to the PC's strengths to allow him to strut his stuff, or they can be tailored to the PC's weaknesses to reinforce the idea that he or she needs friends and allies.

One great thing that the One-on-One Approach provides is the opportunity for each player to establish the character outside the context of the entire group. The player with the rogue character has to think beyond "I'm the sneaky one," because there are no other PCs to compare and contrast himself to.

These are tricky to plan out. It's best, for example, for each to tie together somehow. The best possible result would be that at the first session where all the PCs come together, they are each attempting something similar, they realize that working together is the best approach, and that each of them brings something different to the table. For example, at the end of each individual session, the PC realizes that in order to accomplish some individual goal, they have to get inside a wizard's tower, but they also realize that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to do alone. When they get together and pool their resources, each has learned, in their individual session, something vital about the tower—its guardians, traps, nature, and so on—that comes in very handy in the scenario. With this knowledge, working together, they each reach their individual goal, but realize that they only did it by working together.

The Dialog Session

Let everyone know that it's likely that they'll roll nary a die in the first session. In the first session you describe the background of the setting, hand out any campaign setting materials you have prepared, describe your house rules, and help everyone figure out how the campaign starts and how the group gets together. This session also gives the players an opportunity to introduce their characters, allowing them to get to know one another, and figure out how they're going to fit together as the campaign progresses. If the wizard PC is an overbearing fop, the rest of the players get this idea right off the bat and know what to expect in upcoming sessions (and have some time to figure out how they're going to react to him both at first and as time goes on).

It's possible that at this point, the players don't even have finished PCs yet, only character concepts. Maybe you combine this with a character creation session, or maybe that's the next session. Most players are going to be eager to get "really playing," so it's not a bad idea to have some action planned for the following session.

The Dialog Session is only a good idea in campaigns where a lot of roleplaying is expected. This is a terrible way to start off a hack-and-slash dungeon delving campaign.

Fight!

An interesting way to start off the first session of a brand new campaign is with a fight. You can, if you wanted, literally have the first thing out of your mouth be "roll for initiative," explaining the general situation once that's done. This combat can be what brings the PCs together, forging the ties that bind. Maybe the PCs are the only witnesses to a mugging and they all (not necessarily intentionally working together) chase after the perpetrators. Maybe the PCs are on the road, coincidentally near one another, when a monster attacks.

If you're up for something a bit different, you can just assume that the characters are already together, and then when the fight's over, you can backtrack—in the style of a flashback in a movie or book—to the moment when the PCs got together, how they ended up where they are now, and how they got into the fight. This latter suggestion could be accused of being "railroading" (the DM forcing the players down a particular path), but it is an interesting change of pace.

The Shocker

"You wake up in the dank cell you were thrown in yesterday. All of your belongings were taken from you as you await trial for a crime you did not commit." The Shocker is a campaign starter that the PCs weren't expecting. They came with standard characters, fully equipped, ready for your standard "all of you meet in a tavern" beginning, but instead they find out that in the first session they're in jail, they've been shipwrecked on a desert island, they're lost in the jungle, they stand in the middle of a city just as the last tremor of a major, cataclysmic earthquake fades, or they are all kneeling as one of them is crowned king of a small kingdom.

The Shocker is useful for knocking the PCs off-kilter, forcing them to think on their feet. It creates a memorable first session, which is often a great way to start off a campaign. That said, you'll likely be dashing some player expectations on the rocks, and sometimes players have certain expectations because they're expecting what they

The Players' Responsibility

Just as it's the DM's responsibility to create a campaign setting where the PCs can fit in, join together, and have fun, the players have responsibilities too. It's a player's responsibility to bring to the first session (or create in the first session) a character that fits into the DM's world. The character has to be one that could conceivably work with the other PCs. The player should no more create a character that doesn't want to work with the other PCs than the DM should force the PCs to fight a dragon with a CR of 15 higher than their average level in the first session. Neither would be fair, and neither lends itself to a good roleplaying game experience. When a player looks to the DM and says "my character doesn't have any reason to be with these other people," or "my character doesn't have any reason to go off on an adventure," that's the *player's* fault, not the DM's.

Players need to remember that it's a group activity, and the responsibility of making it all work, of including everyone, and making sure everyone has fun isn't solely in the purview of the DM.

In fact, it's not unreasonable for a DM to say to the players that it is their responsibility to come up with a way for all the PCs to meet and band together. Many DMs take on this task, but really, the DM's got enough to prepare for, particularly for that first session. Requiring this of the players will encourage them to have a group motivation and a reason to stay together as well as get together.

If, during the first session, someone says, "there's no way my character would go off with everyone else and do this," the proper response is, "well, I'm sure they all wave goodbye as they leave you behind."

want. While you want to surprise your players, you don't want to deny them what they want, at least not in a major way. If a player created a bard with lots of ranks in Gather Information and she suddenly finds that her character is lost in the middle of a desert with no people around for hundreds of miles, that's probably not a fun surprise. At the very least, she should get some idea that her character concept will come into play eventually, and in actual fact "eventually" really should end up being within the first three sessions at least. (You wouldn't want to create a wizard only to find out that magic doesn't work in the DM's new setting, or play a fighter in a campaign where there was no chance of a combat for many sessions.)

The Set Up

Of course, the most basic introductory session is one that simply sets up the first adventure and gets the PCs into the thick of things. The archetypal (and clichéd) such session would have the PCs in a tavern, getting to know each other over drinks, when they are approached by a mysterious stranger who offers them a reward for performing some task.

But a set up can be just that—a set up, in the "con game" sense of the phrase. You could use the first session to set them up to really throw them a curve ball the next session, or at the very end of this one.

For example, you start in the aforementioned tavern, and the PCs go off and prepare themselves for the mysterious stranger's quest, when suddenly a starship blazes out of the sky and lands in the middle of the simple little (fantasy) village. End of session. That's a cliffhanger they'll remember, and one that they'll be thinking about for the days leading up to the next session. They were expecting a traditional fantasy campaign, you'd done everything to lead them to believe that's what they're getting, and suddenly, they realize it's an entirely different campaign. It's science fantasy, and all the assumptions are out the door. Instead of fighting orcs, they're fighting robots.

The Last Word on the First Word

Just as it's important to try to make a good first impression when you meet new people, you want your campaign to make a good first impression on the players. By the end of the first session, you want them thinking and wondering not just about what the next session is going to be like, but what 5 sessions from now will be like and what will happen when the PCs all reach 10th level.

The first session should contain at least brief hints of things to come. Rumors of a gathering of the barbarian tribes presages the campaign arc six levels from now when barbarians invade. A brief mention of the heir apparent to the throne foretells of a political campaign arc you've got planned. The PCs might even literally pass by the main campaign villain on the street and not even know it.

Put three times as much thought and preparation into the introductory session as you would a regular session. Try to review all the rules issues likely to come up so that things move along particularly briskly. Be more descriptive than usual. This is the players' first glimpse of the campaign setting ever, so make it clear them what they see. Put it in the context of their own backgrounds: "The wall around the palace is 15 feet high. You've been told all your lives that the guards in the tower show no quarter to anyone attempting to scale it and fill intruders full of arrows." Give the PCs the chance to ask NPCs questions—this is often the best way to learn about a new setting.

The introductory session should include every PC and give each something important to do. It should include all different kinds of encounters.

In other words, the first session simply should be particularly fun.

Next Time: Special Sessions Part 2: The Marathon Session.

Monte Cook is the author of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Check out his publishing company, Malhavoc Press, at montecook.com.

DOWN AT THE DOCKS

BY RUSSELL BROWN,
BY KYLE HUNTER,

Though they may have a reputation for danger, filth, and seediness, the docks district is often the heart of a thriving city. Here trade goods flow in and out, and people from distant lands meet for the first time. Old ships are repaired, and new ships rise from freshly joined keels. All this demands the efforts of craftsmen, businessmen, and professional sailors, and wherever trade goods and money change hands there will also be swindlers and thieves nearby. Use the following NPC encounters to spice up the docks of your city or to send your PCs off to an adventure on the high seas.

Court Mage

A rigger working high atop the main mast of one of the ships in port spots a storm on the horizon and shouts a warning to the workers on the docks below. Word spreads quickly and suddenly all of the sailors and dock workers stop what they're doing and begin furling sails, stacking lumber, coiling rope, and adding extra mooring lines to the docked ships. A white-haired old man with his robe tied up at his waist approaches the PCs with a look of desperation and asks if they will help him move crates off of the quay and into a warehouse before the storm hits. The old man is **Phentos**

(NG male human sorcerer 7), the court mage of a small island kingdom that has been overrun by an army of sahuagin. The crates contain what records of the kingdom he could save. Phentos doesn't know what has become of the island's royal family.

Lost Ship Con

Four worn-looking sailors (human rogue 3, Bluff +7) stand in a group. One shares what he's heard about the recent loss of a trading ship named the *Bellerophon*. A well-dressed tradesman named **Aghas Lamm** (NG male half-elf aristocrat 4) overhears the conversation and asks for details. Aghas is interested because he owns some of the now worthless shares of the *Bellerophon's* voyage. Another merchant appears, introduces himself as **Guy Whuth** (CN male halfling rogue 5, Bluff +10), and tells Aghas he should pay no attention to the stories sailors make up. Aghas still appears concerned, so Guy offers to buy his shares for half the price he paid for them. The entire scene is a con. The sailors and Guy Whuth, whose real name is Hald Backbiter, are working together. The *Bellerophon* is fine and will arrive in a day or two, loaded with expensive cargo.

Menagerie Keeper

The boisterous, singsong voice of **Alomann Ghi** (CN male gnome bard 9) carries across the docks, announcing the arrival of his latest catch. The sailors of the cargo ship *Jade Anchor* are busy turning the wheel of a long wooden crane to offload Alomann's cages of exotic animals, including an otyugh (38 hp, *Monster Manual* 204), a pair of stirges (5 hp each, *Monster Manual* 236), and a sea cat weakened by weeks out of the water (35 hp, *Monster Manual* 220). Alomann plans to transport the beasts to the menagerie he keeps for the local ruler, but he doesn't realize that the latch of the sea cat's cage has slipped open.

Navigator Mages

A man and a woman look down at the docks from the deck of an ornately detailed golden galleon. They both hold staffs of gnarled and mossy driftwood and wear necklaces of large seashells. The woman is **Toa Sheleaf** (NG female human druid 13) and the man is her initiate, **Fareye Ghalor** (NG male human druid 7). They are both Guardians of the Crossing, druids charged with helping important ships cross the ocean without incident using spells like *know direction, speak with animals, summon nature's ally, commune with nature,* and *control weather.* Over her years of service, Toa has cast *awaken* on many sea creatures and befriended tribes aquatic elves that now seek her out to provide aid and information.

Ratkillers

Four young boys armed with small clubs run back and forth along the docks, shouting to each other. They are ratkillers, orphans and castoffs hired by **Oakum Jinn** (N male human commoner 6, Profession [sailor] +8), the master of the quays, to live at the docks and hunt down rats before they can board the ships. Ratkillers have a better life than the typical street urchin, so their numbers are limited to prevent every poor child in the city from running through the docks with clubs.

Recruiter

Sellene Weaver (NE female human commoner 8, Profession [sailor] +10), the first mate of the four-masted military barque *Ambeon,* sits on a barrel beside the gangplank wearing a wide-brimmed hat. In front of her is a table made from a short deck plank and some barrels. A small group of dirty and poorly dressed men, women, and boys waits in line to talk with her. Weaver has lost much of her crew and is recruiting new sailors for a long, cold, and dangerous trip. She lies to the applicants, claiming to be headed to a warm island to the south. They, in turn, lie to her about their qualifications. If Weaver doesn't make her quota soon, she sends three of her roughest sailors (CN human warrior 4, hp 26, Atk +6 melee [1d6+2 club]) to comb the back alleys of the docks and conscript any drunk sailors they find.

Ropemakers

About a dozen men and boys spin handles on large wooden frames to twist strands of hemp into larger and larger ropes. A master rope maker, **Eron Rigger** (N male half-elf expert 5, Craft [ropemaking] +9, Use Rope +8), supervises a small team of men working very carefully on a single rope. While the men spin and Eron judges the tension, a long-haired wizard named **Zydiff** (N male human wizard 4) sprinkles powder along the length of the rope, gestures and chants. They are in the final day of the creation of a *rope of climbing,* and any interruption may spoil their work.

Traders and Translator

Four wealthy traders (N human aristocrat 5, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9) dressed in dark velvet coats, billowy pants, and large hats walk along the docks, complaining in a foreign language and waving thin walking canes at the ships under construction. They use a jovial hunchbacked translator named **Ranmos** (NG male human bard 6, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +10) to talk to the dock's muscular master shipwright, **Kallik** (N male half-orc expert 10, Craft [shipmaking] +16), who walks with them. The four traders are funding the construction of a new cargo ship, the *Coffee Witch,* and Kallik is explaining that he is behind schedule because the carpenters sent to cut timbers have been driven out of the forest by wood spirits.

Victualer

Two dozen barrels are lined up on the quay, ready to be loaded onto the *Hellcat,* a well-trimmed black schooner. A dwarf with long, ill-kept hair and a stained apron moves along the line, pulling frogs from a dripping sack and dropping one into each barrel before placing the barrel's top on and hammering it in place. The dwarf is **Thonnil** (N male dwarf expert 5), a local victualer supplying food and water to the *Hellcat.* The barrels contain water for the trip, and the sailors believe that as long as the frog stays alive, the water is safe to drink.

TO THE GAMES!

BY RICHARD PETT
BY KYLE HUNTER

From simple village fairs to grandiose and fabulous tournaments, competitive sport is a fun way for your PCs to show off to the locals without destroying the town. These events usually have prizes for the various contests along with a grand prize for the overall champion. And they offer a great opportunity to gain the attention of noble or wealthy patrons.

Here are six competitions for you to use. Most of these events could take place over several days of heats, if the competitive field is large enough. The crowd of any large sporting event quickly picks out its heroes and villains. Often the most handsome hero is the darling of the crowd, but it could just as easily be the enemy who opposes the local lord's unpopular son. The cheering or heckling crowd can be an integral part of the event, and woe betide anyone caught cheating by using *bull's strength* or similar magic to enhance their skills.

Toss the Hammer

The hammer is huge and heavy, made of iron with a great stone on the end of a 6-foot shaft.

In order to throw the hammer, have each contestant make a Strength check along with a ranged attack roll. Subtract

10 from the contestant's Strength check result to calculate the total distance thrown (in feet). Use the ranged attack roll to judge accuracy. If the contestant hits AC 20, the hammer went in the right direction, and the full distance counts. If the hammer missed AC 20 but hit AC 15, the throw was slightly off. Reduce the distance traveled by 25%. If the hammer misses AC 15, reduce the distance by half.

Each contest uses the best of three throws, with the longest single throw winning.

You could allow local experts to have special skill in hammer hurling or other contests, and give them up to a +4 bonus on their Strength checks.

Tug-O-War

The rope is about 4 inches thick, while a 10-foot-wide pit filled with fresh fertilizer separates the two teams. Teams of three members compete in this challenge. The team member with the best Strength score makes the check while his team members attempt to aid him. Each successful opposed Strength check pulls the other team 2 feet toward the pit. Each team starts the competition 6 feet from the edge. The rope has a break DC of 28; if both of the check results equal or exceed this, the rope breaks and the match is declared a draw.

Note that if this contest lasts more than 10 rounds, each team member needs to start making Constitution checks (DC 10 + 1 per previous check) to avoid becoming first fatigued, and then exhausted.

Throw the Spear

Of course, no ordinary spear would suffice for this game. This 12-foot-long spear is gigantic, difficult for a Medium character to lift, and fashioned of iron.

The spear throw works in the same way as the hammer toss (above), except that the penalty for missing the target AC is doubled.

Weightlifting

This contest uses anvils, lead ingots, and troughs rather than ordinary weights. The winner is the contestant that successfully lifts the heaviest thing over his head. Each contestant gets two tries to lift each weight.

Each higher weight requires a progressively harder Strength check. The first weight is a coping stone (DC 10), then a small apprentice anvil (DC 14), then a lead ingot (DC 18), then onto a full anvil (DC 22) and finally a stone trough (DC 26). If somehow the competition goes on beyond this point you may wish to consider using horses, cows, or other animals, or perhaps huge dolmens or great stones hastily retrieved from nearby stone circles.

Toss the Caber

The caber, a huge tree trunk with its branches stripped off, is difficult to lift and balance, let alone toss. It is nearly 18 feet long. Tossing the caber is not only difficult, it is rather dangerous as well. In order to lift the caber, a contestant must make a DC 15 Strength check, followed by a DC 10 Balance check. If he fails either of these checks he drops the caber before he can attempt to throw it. Once he has lifted it, he makes a DC 20 Strength check to throw the caber. The highest successful Strength check is the winner. If a contestant ever rolls a natural 1 while handling the caber, he fumbles it and drops it on himself, taking 2d10 points of bludgeoning damage.

Hurling Horseshoes

A popular children's game, this event is less about strength, and more about good aim and a steady hand.

The horseshoes must be hurled onto a peg at varying distances. A horseshoe's range increment is 5 feet, and the peg's AC is 15. Horseshoes are considered an improvised weapon, so most characters will take a –4 penalty on their attack rolls. If both contestants hit (each is allowed three throws), the target is moved back another 5 feet. This process is repeated until one of them misses more throws than the other.

Archery

A typical archery target has an outer ring (AC 15, worth 1 point), an inner ring (AC 20, worth 2 points) and a bull's-eye (AC 25 worth 5 points). Each round consists of five shots. This contest is usually one of the most popular at the fair, with several rounds each eliminating half of the contestants. When only eight remain, the target is moved back one range increment after each round.

Running races

Use opposed Constitution checks for distance marathons, and opposed Strength checks for sprints. Give characters with various speeds a bonus or penalty on their check for each foot by which their speed differs from 30. (So a barbarian with a speed of 40 would have +10, while a halfling would have –10.) Occasionally races introduce obstacles to make things more interesting. These could include pits to jump over, walls to climb, balance beams to negotiate, or even monsters to overcome.

Adventures at the Games

Contests, tournaments, and fairs make a great backdrop for adventure hooks. The influx of visitors, the huge prizes, and potential glory draw a heady mix people from across the world. Here's one possible idea to get you started:

The Feud

The Fores and Bafly clans have been at odds for centuries. The two dwarf clans from neighboring valleys have disputed the line of a border for generations. The conflict rarely leads to open hostility, but clans hotly contest each event at the annual Lord Grubbin Games held under the dark cliffs of Mount Grubbin. This year the feud heats up as Deles, the daughter of the Fores clan's chief, falls in love with Tulg Bafly. The two meet at the games and decide to elope. Their disappearance leads to accusations of murder, and after a bitter exchange a battle breaks out. It is eventually halted by the appearance of a bloody Deles clutching a crushed flower, sobbing uncontrollably. Tulg has been slain by an evil werewolf dwarf, the bastard son of a similar union between the two dwarven clans years ago. And Deles has become part of his pack...

MYTHIC LOCALES

BY JEFFREY GERRETSE,
BY KYLE HUNTER,

Frontier settlements often hold remnants of the societies that preceded them. In these remote locations, the landscape plays into stories of myth and legend that explain natural and supernatural phenomena. How these stories interact with history is the purview not only of scholars, but also of adventurers, for their actions are often intertwined with the tales surrounding curious places.

This article describes seven locations that blend history and myth. These can be dropped into any campaign to add local flavor or to introduce new plot hooks for your band of adventurers.

The Bleeding Stone

An hour's travel from a secluded village, there rests a small copse of trees. Within these woods, a tall stone protrudes from a bed of crisp leaves surrounded by vigilant boughs. Thin trails of fresh blood trace lines down the sides of this 4-foot-

high stone to soak into the damp earth. According to the villagers, the stone was once the knife of a young soldier, who upon returning from war and discovering his beloved dead, plunged the blade into his chest before driving it into the earth. By will of the god Heironeous, the knife slowly became the bleeding stone now familiar to the locals. They say that when the stone's blood runs dry, someone in the village is victim to a grisly crime, and when that person's soul has passed, the stone bleeds again in mourning.

The stone has been dry now for three days. A local ranger carried the news to the village, and fearing the tragedy the stone foretells, the village has shut itself off from all visitors.

The Chalk Man

A chalk hillside that slopes toward a busy road bears the immense carving of a crude spearman. Travelers are uneasy with the image and claim it watches them as they pass. Some say the carving pays homage to a great hero of antiquity, but others claim the image is possessed by a warrior spirit. During winter rainstorms, chalk dust sometimes runs with the water into the nearby farmlands, and when the clouds recede, travelers find the carving's position has changed. The warrior's head, for instance, might be facing a different direction, or his spear might be held in two hands instead of one. The significance of these changes are unknown, but for the next few days after such storms, wild dogs howl atop the hill and travelers keep vigilant, wary of the warrior spirit thought to be contained in the chalk man.

The Laughing Tomb

A chambered barrow along a nearby ridge overlooks the farmlands of a quaint community. Cairn material once blocked the entrance to the barrow, but now the stones are scattered throughout the forecourt. The burial site is the resting place of a child murderer, and it is mostly avoided for fear of evil spirits. Every so often, though, farmers working their fields hear childlike laughter within the tomb, and a few days later, another child disappears. Such disappearances are never explained and the children are never found. Though the farmers clearly suspect that the evil originates from the barrow, no one has had the courage to enter the tomb in search of the missing children. Two attempts have been made within recent years to block the entrance, but such obstructions only last a few days before they are torn down, the obliterated stones found scattered among small, childlike bones.

The Ruined Church

A ruined church dedicated to St. Cuthbert rests inside an old druidic henge not far from a bustling trading outpost. The tall stones form a wide circle around the church's mossy walls and cast long shadows over the decrepit structure, giving it a blighted appearance. Townsmen say that after religious fanatics massacred the local druids, they constructed a church within the henge in order to rid it of its pagan evil. According to the story, the murdered druids rose from the dead after the church was completed and took their revenge, destroying the sanctuary and slaying the zealots. Followers of St. Cuthbert were careful to extract the bodies and bury them properly, but the henge has since been left alone. According to the townsmen, the druids rise again once every year to sanctify the site with solemn rituals, and the sound of their chanting can be heard throughout the town. These rituals occur more frequently now, which urges fanatical followers of St. Cuthbert to consider the reclamation of the old ruin and the permanent extermination of its dead occupants.

The Stone of Faces

Nestled within a small forest is a cool, refreshing spring bordered by soft grasses and the yellow-green glow of sunlight filtering through the canopy. A number of vague faces are carved into a vertical rock standing near the spring, and each face expresses an emotion from elation to sorrow. The site was once the domain of a naiad (water nymph) worshiped by a handful of local druids sworn to protect her. The druids were ultimately slain by an agent of Erythnul who sought to destroy the naiad; when she was killed a short time later, she snatched the souls of her former defenders and imprisoned them in the stone that once marked her home. Some say that whoever frees these imprisoned souls will be blessed with good fortune, while others say such a savior would be cursed with the naiad's ire.

The Watchful Ladies

Every morning, the sun rises between six stones that overlook a shallow valley from a hillside summit. Travelers venerate the stones as symbols of safety and security, and itinerant pilgrims willing to make the detour often decorate them with religious iconography. The stones, according to legend, are all that remains of the souls of six young women slain by brigands during a pilgrimage many years ago. Now the women warn travelers of danger by blocking the sun during the early morning hours, and travelers commonly watch for such an omen at sunrise before making their daily preparations.

Despite their sober duty, the watchful ladies are famously joyful and good-natured: it is said that they dance when the sun goes down, thankful for another day of peace.

The Weeping Tomb

In the outskirts of a small farming community is an ancient burial chamber constructed from four upright stones supporting a large capstone. The uprights are each etched with a single rune, but the symbols are foreign to the farmers. There is no evidence of someone having actually been buried in the chamber, for the earth within is smooth and even, yet the farmers respect the sanctity of the site and leave it well enough alone. However, on cloudless nights with a rising full moon, the farmers say they hear weeping from inside the tomb, though no one has ever been found in or around the stones during these times. Local children play near the stones during the daylight hours, and somewhat to the discomfort of the rest of the community, each child knows various details about the life of a young girl whom they claim is buried there.

ELLA MORNEL

BY CHRISTOPHER WISSEL
BY TYLER WALPOLE

The demon lord Juiblex has little use for his worshipers. He is content to simply exist in his realm, idly destroying everything in his path. Unfortunately for his many thralls, they usually find themselves consumed as well, in both body and mind.

Ella Mornel was born to a pair of blind apothecaries. Her father was inattentive, distracted by his work in the labs below their cottage. Her mother was fretful and afraid to have a child that could see. As a result, Ella was forced to remain indoors during her early years, helping the family sniff chemicals and mix rare ingredients. Her environment was dimly lit and without mirrors, and Ella often cried out in terror to her mother, who was oblivious to the many cockroaches and other creeping things that flitted about the shadows of the darkened cottage.

As the years went by, Ella became withdrawn and emotionless. She left home and made her way to a port city, where she lived in the darkness under the city's docks, watching barnacles and sea brine collect in the tide pools, occasionally feasting on rotting fish. She became horribly agoraphobic, and cringed from reflective surfaces and daylight. At first she ran from the peasants and sailors who visited the area, but eventually she started to waylay and kill them instead, using a stolen *wand of polymorph* to destroy them, and taking the meager coppers from their purses for better food.

After years of living like an otyugh, she became deeply depressed, mixing horrid-smelling stews and killing anything that came near. Then one starless midnight, a reason stealer (*Monster Manual II*, page 178) slithered up from the city's deepest sewers. Ella quickly became enamored with strange ooze, as it was capable of absorbing the intelligence, appearance, and capabilities of its prey. She expanded her grisly killings and began stalking spellcasters and other intelligent creatures in the city. During the moments of lucidity after a meal, the creature's oozing face would speak to Ella of the formless countenance of Juiblex.

Vile Feats

Elle posses a few feats that first appeared in the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

Deformity (clawed hands): Ella's hands have been severely deformed, ending in twisted claws. She can make 2 claw attacks that each do 1d6.

Thrall to Demon: Once per day, while committing an evil act, Ella can get a +1 luck bonus on an attack roll, skill check, ability check, saving throw, or level check.

Willing Deformity: Ella gets a +2 deformity bonus on Intimidate checks.

Inspired by this perspective, she returned home and caught up with her parents. Blind and old, they were no match for her, and she joyfully fed them to the slavering ooze. For this horrible act, she became a fledgling thrall of Juiblex.

Unfortunately, Ella's joy was short-lived. The Faceless One has never had much use for his worshipers. Despite sensing his presence and unrelenting power, the Faceless One ignored her completely.

Since the patricide, Ella wandered the countryside alone, trying in vain to commune with Juiblex through the sacrifice of intelligent beings. She creates short-term lairs in remote wilderness areas, or sometimes inside the abandoned ruins of larger cities. Eventually, after she claims enough victims to satiate her madness, the entire lair either collapses from the constant presence of acid, or the local townsfolk begin investigating her activities. Either way, Ella is forced to move on.

Appearance

Ella is slim and unattractive, and her greasy skin exudes a smell similar to rotten cheese and old smoke. Her mousy hair runs in long, tangled strands down her back. Her dark eyes are bloodshot and wide-eyed, constantly darting around to check shadows and corners. When speaking to others, she stares blankly over their shoulder rather than making eye contact.

She has no concern for her appearance, and wears whatever rags are most convenient. She keeps her deformed hands wrapped in loose, bloodstained bandages to cover the numerous open wounds caused by breaking mirrors and other reflective surfaces with her fists. While she prefers her natural form, she does use her alter self ability to disguise her deformed hands when she encounters other people.

Tactics

Ella is a reticent opponent, preferring to kill with stealth. If she decides to attack, she begins with defensive and summoning spells, trying to trap victims alive so she can feed them to her reason stealer. If pressed in open combat, especially against superior numbers, she uses all of her resources to flee.

If she is captured, she bides her time wearing a flat, catatonic gaze until an opportunity for escape presents itself. If forced to talk, she screams hoarsely until left alone.

Her lairs are full of oozes and noxious smoke, and she takes time to ensure that surviving visitors will be discouraged from returning.

Development

Ella is a loner, and never willingly seeks out companionship. However, if she stumbles across a creature that is physically abnormal or presents a unique outlook, she converses with it for awhile. Over time, however, her spiraling instability causes her to either kill it or run away.

On very rare occasions, she even befriends another party of adventurers. Sometimes she wishes to experience the pantomimes of social contact, but often it is the result of a subconscious mind seeking structure and form, an escape from a life of meaninglessness. Inevitably though, any bonds or kindnesses shown to her during her associations are ultimately annihilated by her murky fascination with Juiblex, leaving her alone again, and often with greater enemies.

Ella Mornel **CR 14**

Female human rogue 6/fighter 4/thrall of Juiblex 4

CE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Abyssal

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15; Dodge, Mobility

Hp 91 (14 HD)

Resist acid 10

Fort +14, **Ref** +17, **Wil** +10; evasion

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +18 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +12

Atk Options sneak attack +3d6, Spring Attack

Special Attacks alter self, contagion 1/day (DC 15), corrosive touch 3/day, sickening slime (DC 16), *summon ooze* 1/day

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of expeditious retreat*, *wand of polymorph* (7 charges), *wand of ray of enfeeblement* (35 charges)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 13

SQ heal at twice normal rate, trap sense +1, trapfinding

Feats Deformity (clawed hands), Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Thrall to Demon, Weapon Finesse, Willing Deformity

Skills Balance +10, Bluff +6, Disguise +8 (+10 acting), Escape Artist +23, Hide +15, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (religion) +3, Move Silently +15, Use Magic Device +19

Possessions combat gear, *+3 leather armor*, *gloves of Dexterity +2*, *amulet of mighty fists +1*, *cloak of resistance +2*, *ring of minor resist energy (acid)*, *sandals of spider climb*, *vest of escape*

Alter Self (Su) Ella can alter her form an appearance at will, as the spell *alter self* (CL 4).

Sickening Slime (Ex) Ella can secrete a smelly slime that coats her body in a thin layer as a standard action. Anyone within 5 feet must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls and skill checks, due to the outrageous odor of the slime.

Corrosive Touch (Ex) Ella can secrete a caustic slime on her hand that deals 2d6 points of acid damage to her. Once secreted, her next attack with an unarmed strike or natural weapon deals an extra 2d6 points of acid damage.

***Summon Ooze* (Sp)** Ella can summon a patch of green slime, a gray ooze, an ochre jelly, or a gelatinous cube as the *summon monster* spell (CL 4).

Contagion (Su) Ella can spread disease as the *contagion* spell (CL 10). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Downer

Fool's Errand

WATER CHURNED WITH GHOST PIRANHA, BLOOD AND SPECTRAL FISH. NEITHER LOOPS NOR THE CRIMSON DEATH SURFACED AFTER IT STILLED. TRAGICALLY, ASTRID DIDN'T SEE THE BARD SACRFICE HIMSELF TO SAVE HER. SHE STILL LAY UNCONSCIOUS BELOW DECK. DOYLE DID HIS SHIP PROUD BRANDISHING CRAZY ANIMATED TATTOOS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE HORROR. BUT ALSO LOST COMRADES. TAGGIT LED A BRIEF CEREMONY.

Story and art by **Kyle Stanley Hunter.** Lettering by **Sean Glenn.** Downer is ©2005 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A **Super Unicorn** production. **www.superunicorn.com**

THIS MISSION IS NONSENSE. WHY CAN'T THIS BLASTED DRAGON JUST MEET US, HE'S SO CLEVER. KNOWING DRAGONS... YOU COULD BE HIM IN DISGUISE.
YEAH, I COULD BE.
LISTEN MATES, LOOK SHARP AND BE COOL, WE'RE HERE.
"THE BAD LUCK CAPITOL, ZUGZWANG."
WARNING
VEG
"WE'VE GOT A BOARDING PARTY HEADED OUR WAY."
TAGGIT, YOU'RE BLEEDING!
IN THE BATTLE--
-- JUST A SCRATCH--
TO BE CONTINUED

HAUNTED
ROADSIDE COACHING INN
Map of Mystery
1 Entrance Hall
2 Great Hall
3 Stairs to Upper Floor
4 Stairs to Cellar
5 Stairs to Entrance Hall
6 Stairs to Ground Floor
7 Office
8 Dining Room
9 Kitchen
10 Pantry
11 Kitchen Staff Bedroom
12 Shared Guest Bedroom
13 Bath Room
14 Well
15 Horse Stalls
16 Servants' Bedrooms
17 Carriage House
18 Servants' Common Hall
19 Innkeeper's Bedroom
20 Luxury Guest Rooms
21 Standard Guest Rooms
22 Upstairs Gallery
23 Smoking Parlor
24 Wine Cellar
25 Hidden Vault
Upper Floor
Ground Floor
Cellar
Road
1 square = 5 feet
WEST

DUNGEON #132

MAP & HANDOUT SUPPLEMENT

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ESCAPE THE GRASP OF JUBILEX!
DEMONLORD OF OOZES AND SLIMES
DUNGEON
VECNA AND THE ISLE OF SECRETS
SAUCY SATYRS • FLESH-EATING BLOBS • TERRIBLE TITANS
MONTE COOK'S DUNGEONCRAFT • BOWNER • MT. ZIGGUR

Steve Ellis

WINGCLIPPER'S REVENGE

by Christopher Wissel

The woodland surrounding the village of Turvin is becoming a dangerous place. Strange light and sounds have been coming from deep in the forest, and now people from the village are starting to disappear. Some evil force is turning nature against mankind, and it's up to the PCs to put a stop to it. A D&D adventure for 4th-level characters.

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Wingclipper

Steve Ellis

Banba

Steve Ellis

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Udon with Dax Gordine and Gala Ferriere

CAVERNS OF THE OOZE LORD

by Campbell Pentney

Something's not right in the hamlet of Verdinica. Why do the locals wear such thick clothing, even in the midst of a hot and muggy summer? And what sort of "prisoner" could make the strange sloshing noises that are heard some nights coming from the gaol? A D&D adventure for 8th-level characters.

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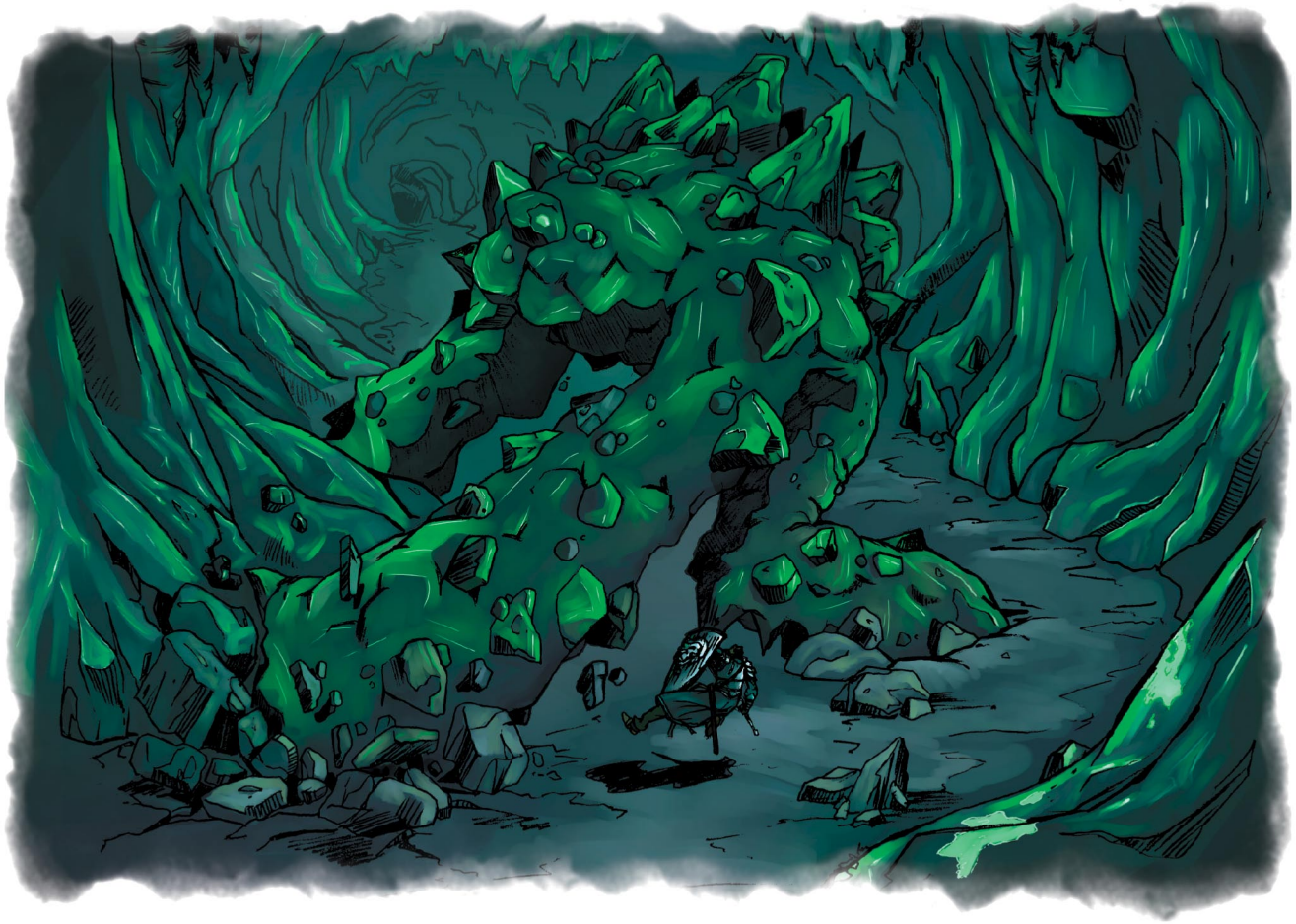

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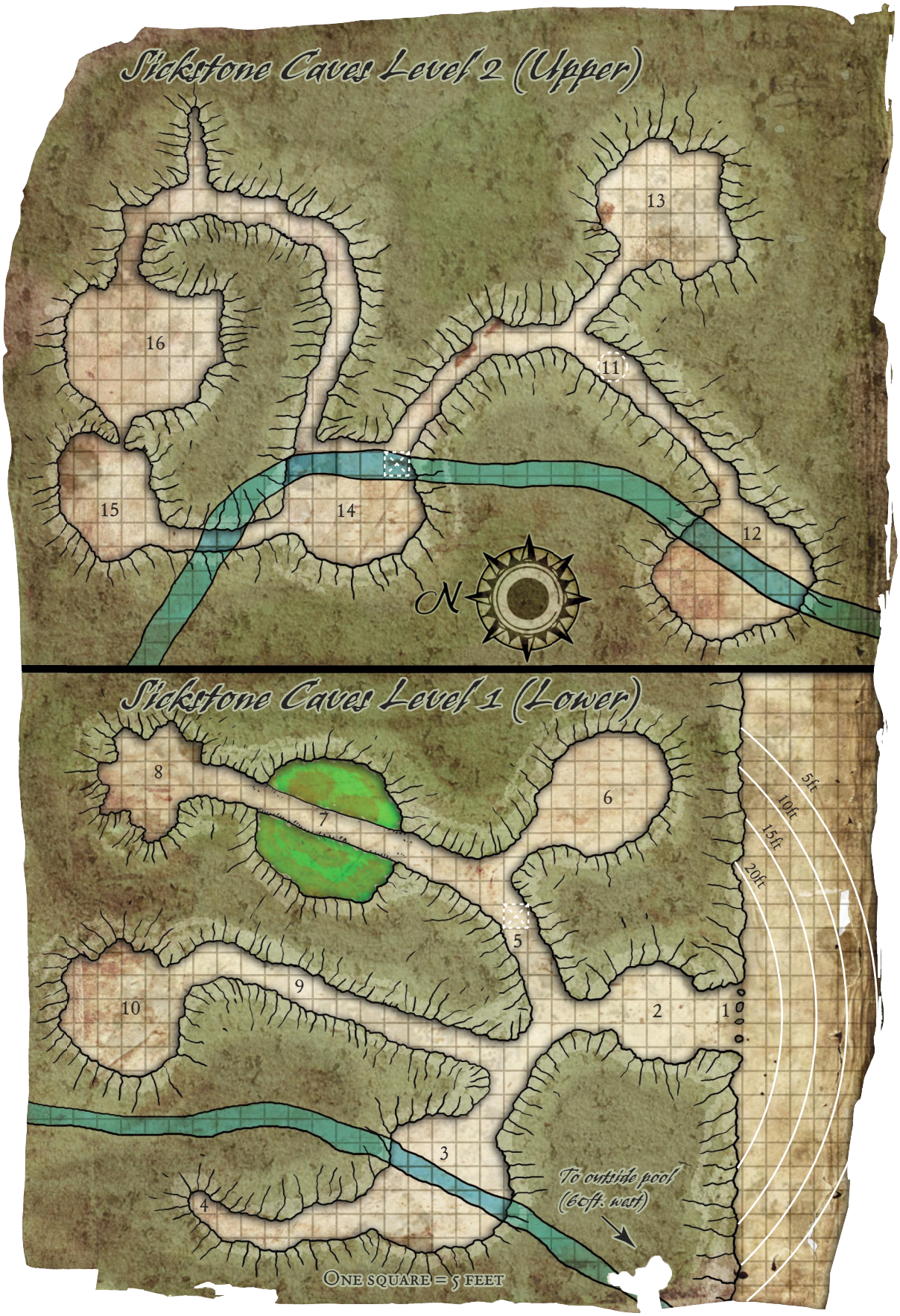

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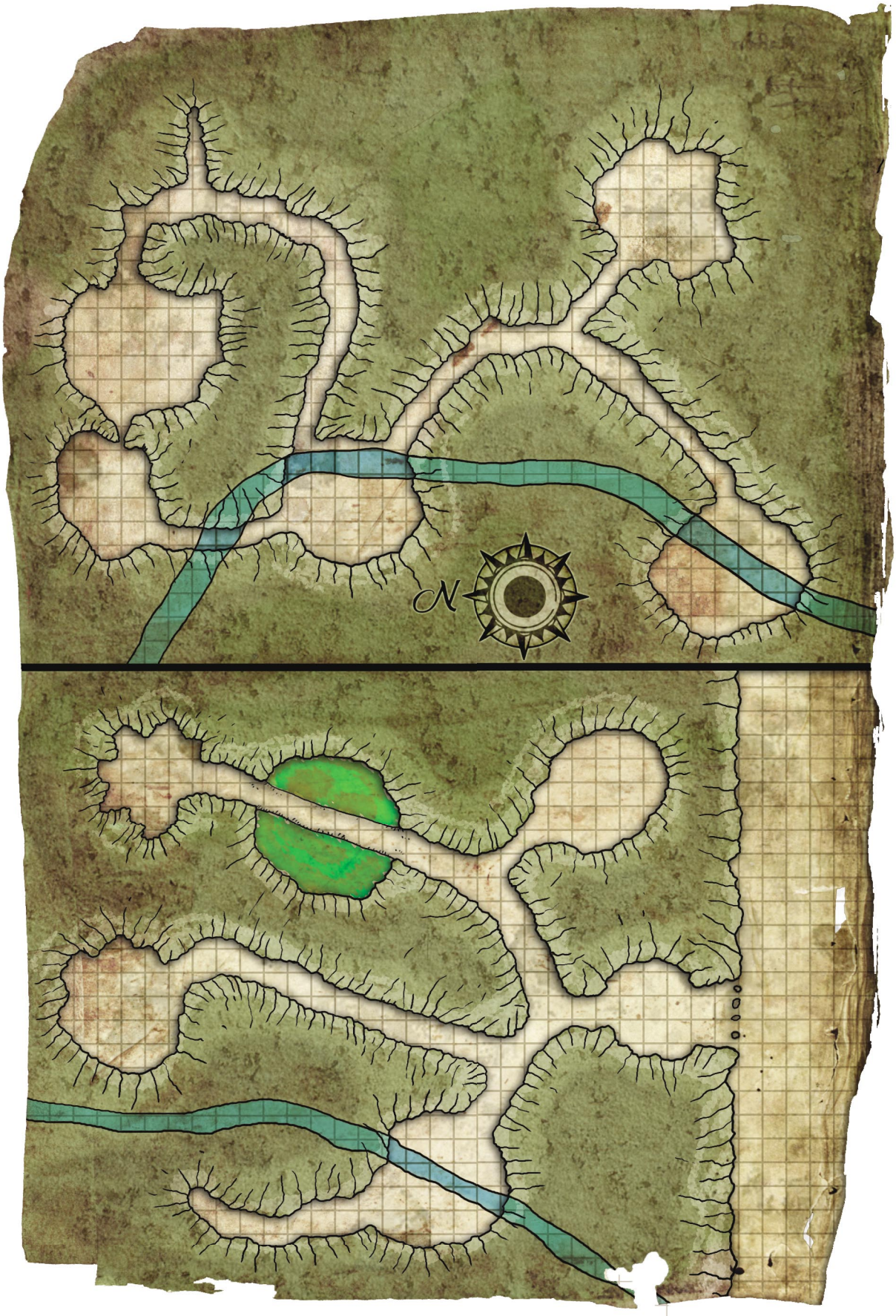

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Slime Creature

Udon with Dax Gordine and Gala Ferriere

Olive Slime

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Morbion

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Joachim Barrum

THE LIBRARY OF LAST RESORT

by Nicolas Logue

Tilagos Island does not appear on most maps of the Nyr Dyv, yet the storm-shrouded island hides the greatest repository of knowledge of an ancient cabal of druids who defeated Kyuss 1,500 years ago. An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 16th-level characters.

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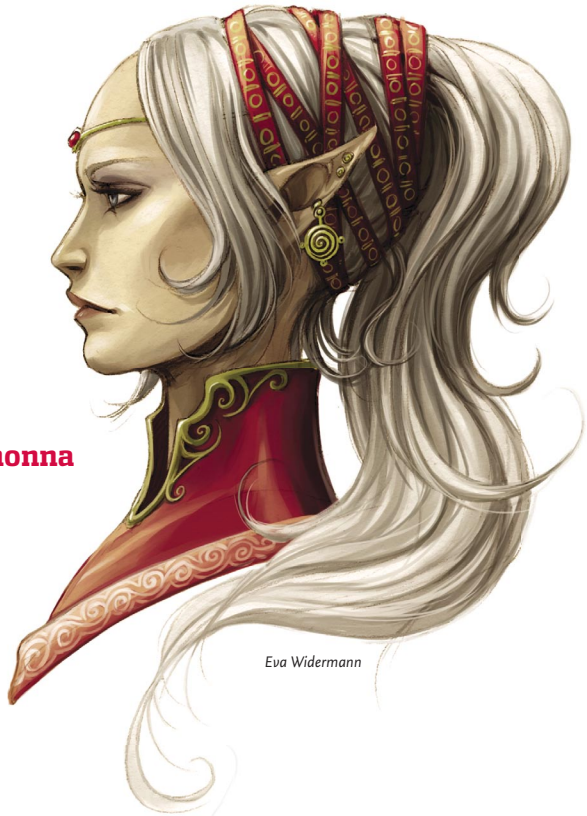
Lashonna



Eva Widermann

Krekie

Eva Widermann

Wild Watcher

Eva Widermann

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Darl Quethos

Eva Widermann

It is as I suspected. The ancient undead dragon Dragotha is the herald of Kyuss. He was granted his unlife by the Wormgod well over 15 centuries ago, after he found the monolith in Kuluth-Mar and brought it to his lair in the Rift Canyon. When Dragotha was slain by Tiamat, Kyuss repaid him with the gift of undeath, and in so doing bound him eternally to his will.

The Rite they performed obscured Dragotha's phylactery from thought, history, and sight... as if it never existed at all. But the Order of the Storm were no fools. They suspected Kyuss would one day rise again, that his worms would learn to walk once more.

Dragotha's presence in the world has been quiet for the last several ages. The loss of his phylactery 1,500 years ago left him a coward. Yet my research proves he stirs from his long sleep, that he now intends to waken Kyuss after all this time. Why now? What has changed? I fear that a journey to the Wormcrawl Fissure to confront the dracolich is my only remaining option.

Balakarde's Journal

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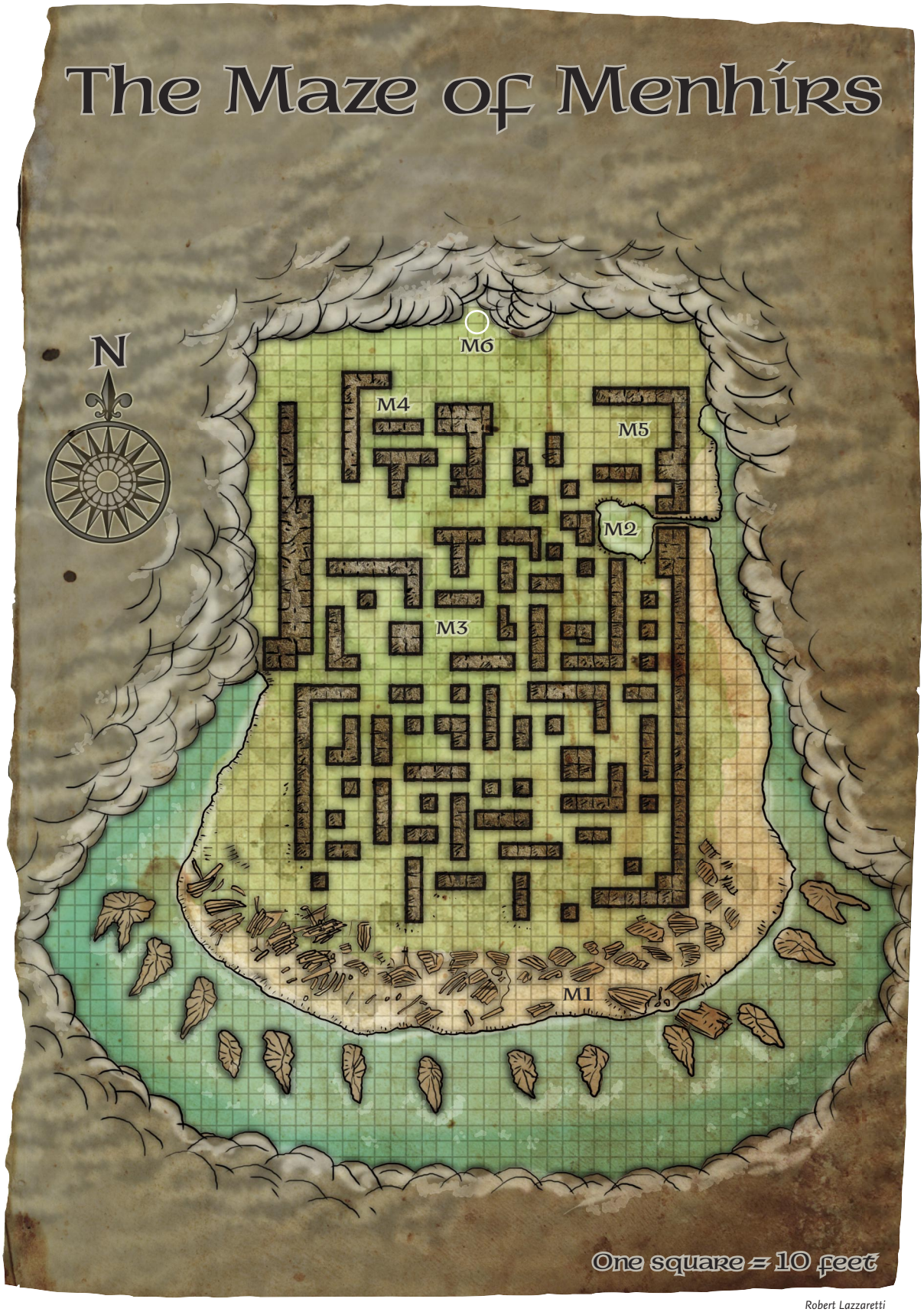

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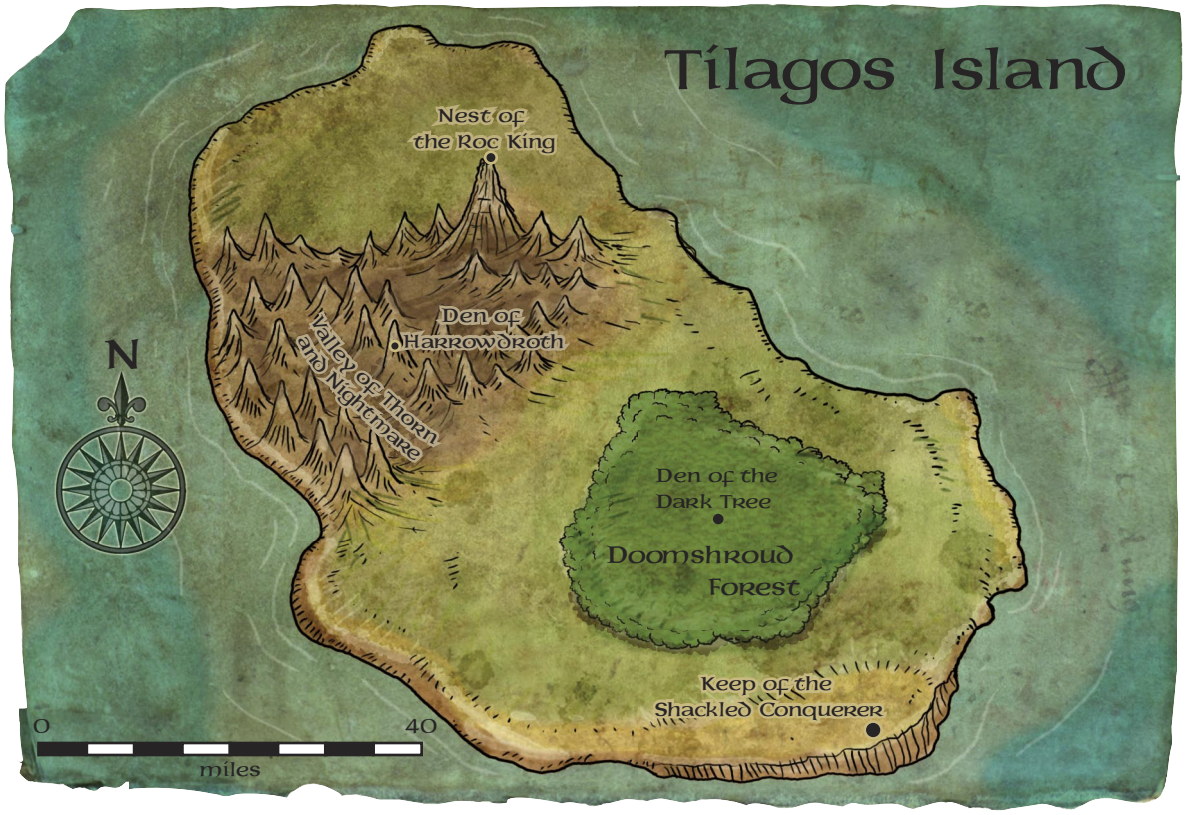

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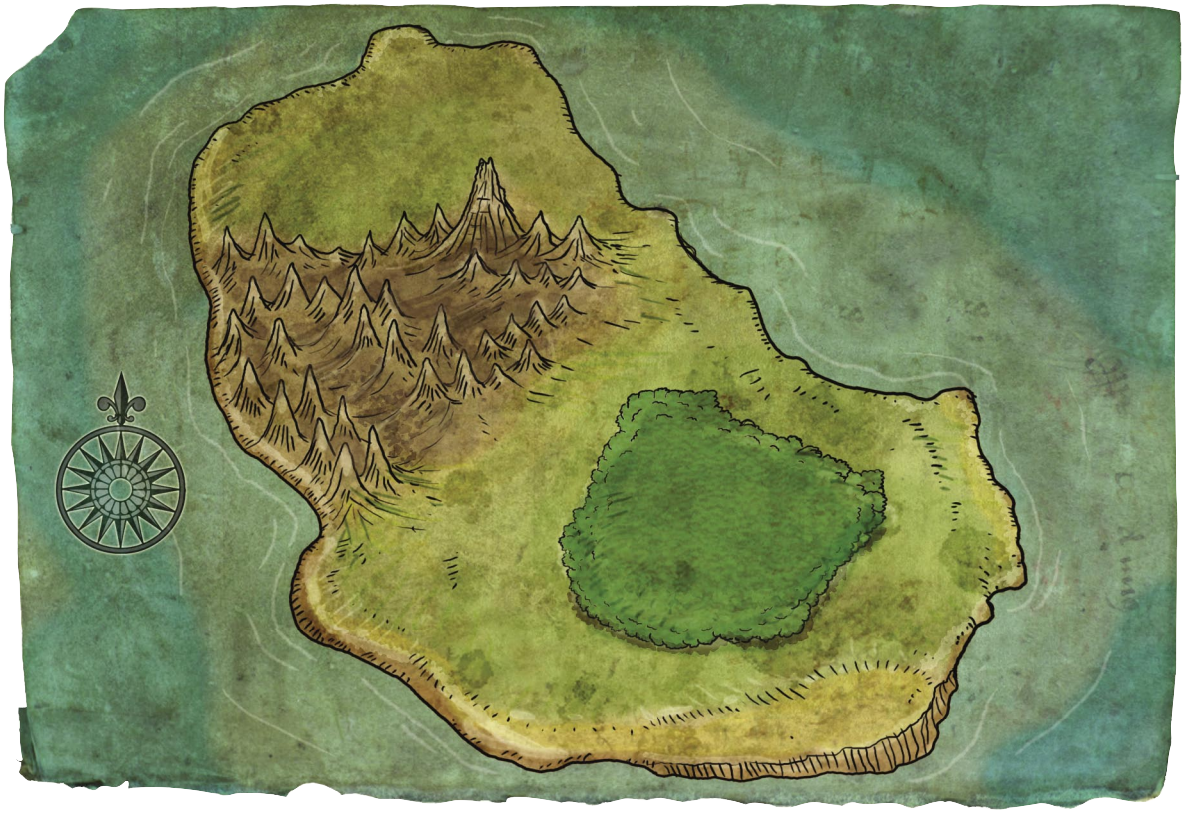

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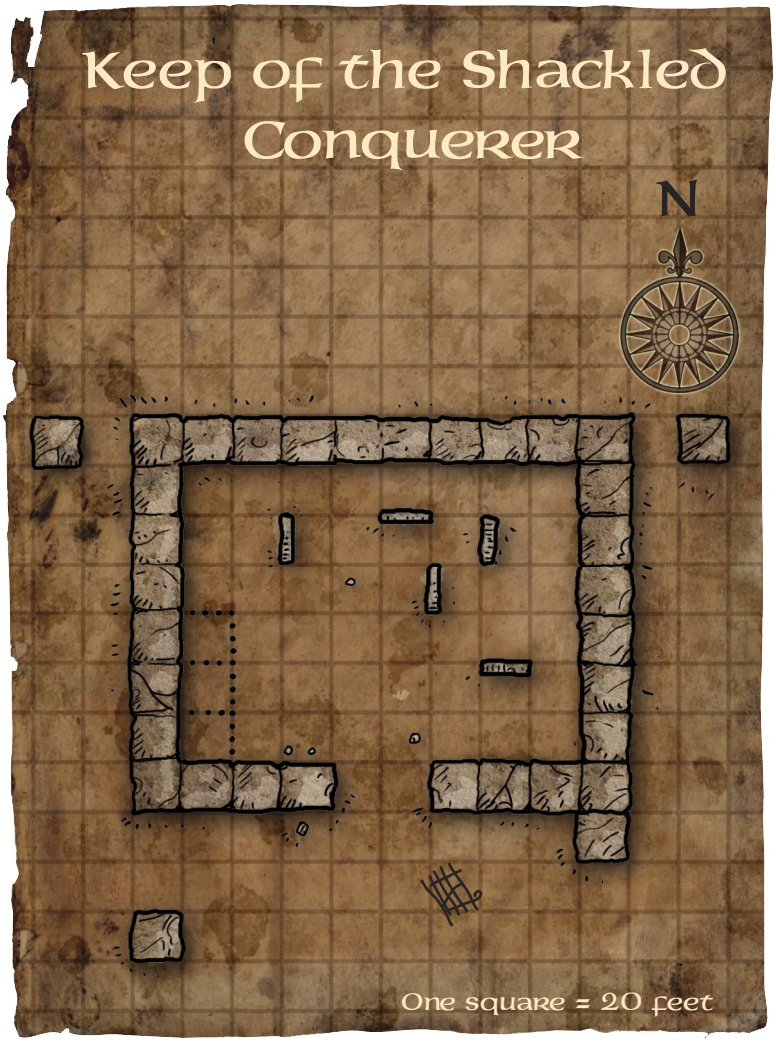

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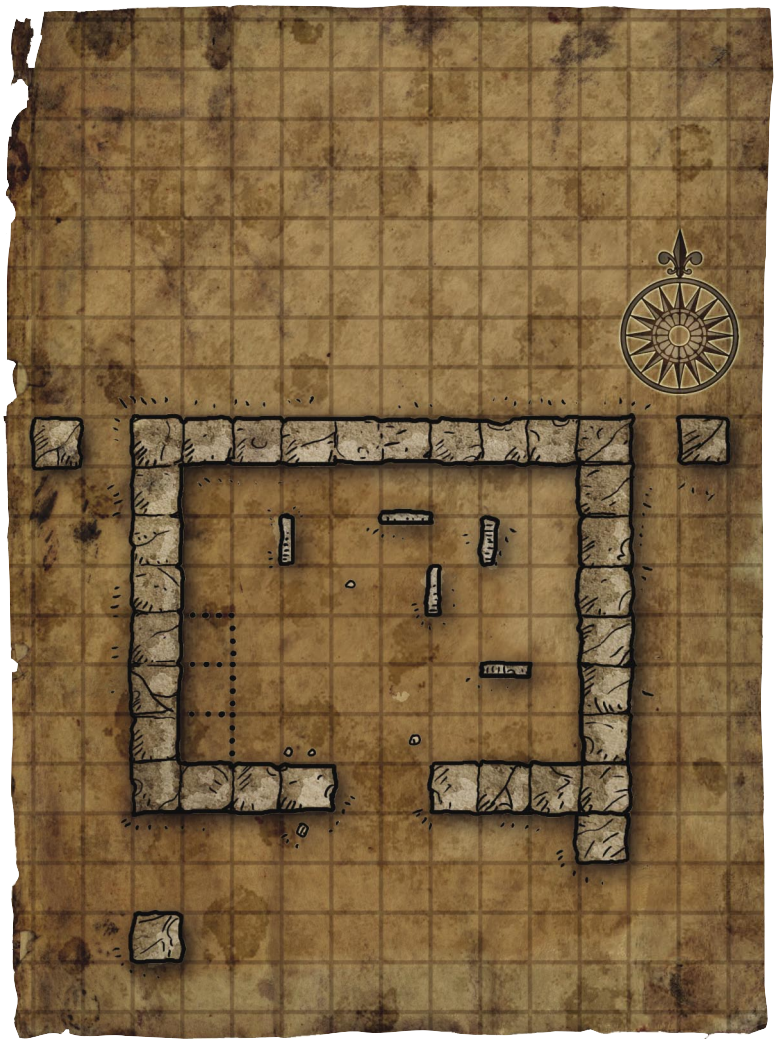

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Steve Prescott

Steve Prescott

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RUNNING THE LIBRARY OF LAST RESORT IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Eric L. Boyd

Conversion notes for Mintarn (Redhand), Myrkul (Vecna), Tarnheel Embuirhan (Prince Zeech), the Sea of Swords (Nyr Dyv, Lake of Unknown Depths), and Skull Gorge (Rift Canyon and Wormcrawl Fissure) have already been mentioned in conversion sidebars for earlier adventures in the adventure path. From Skull Gorge, it is possible to see the peak of the Hill of Lost Souls (White Plume Mountain).

Disciples of Darkness

The Disciples of Darkness are a heretical cult within the remnants of the Church of Myrkul (Vecna), as outlined in *Power of Faerûn*, pages 46-47. For Darl Quethos, replace the Craft Wondrous Item feat with Heretic of the Faith, a feat detailed in the same section of *Power of Faerûn*. Change Darl's *+4 heavy mace* to a *+4 scythe*. Assume the Disciples of Darkness heresy grants Death, Knowledge, Magic, and Undeath as clerical domains (meaning that Darl's domain spells and granted powers remain unchanged).

Jalagar and Sabir Sinfire are members of the Order of the Long Death (Scarlet Brotherhood).

Tilagos Island

The island of Tilagos is part of the Mintarn archipelago. It lies north and west of the main island of Mintarn, just southeast of the isle of Skadaurak. Tilagos is avoided due to the ever-present storms that envelop the island and the presence of Hoondarrh (CE male ancient red dragon), the legendary "Red Rage of Mintarn," on Skadaurak. (See *Dragon* #241 or http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/wn/20021023a.)

Order of the Storm

The Order of the Storm is an ancient and long-forgotten circle of druids faithful to Silvanus (Obad-hai).

Krathanos

Krathanos is a descendant of Lanaxis, the son of Annam and Othea. He venerates Grolantor (Kord).

Hand of Myrkul

In the Year of Shadows (1358 DR), as the Time of Troubles came to a close, the wizard Midnight disintegrated the avatar of Myrkul and teleported his remains out over the sea. Unbeknownst to any of Waterdeep's defenders, Midnight's *disintegrate* spell did not wholly destroy the Lord of Bones. Myrkul's hand and eye survived the spell effect, only to fall into the sea along with the rest of the avatar's dust. Both the *Hand of Myrkul* and the *Eye of Myrkul* are now powerful artifacts. (The dust is not without its powers as well, as discussed in "Eye of Myrkul" in *Dungeon* #83.)

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RUNNING THE LIBRARY OF LAST RESORT IN EBERRON

by Keith Baker

Lashonna

If you have followed the path presented in earlier conversion notes, Kyuss is bonded with the rakshasa overlord Katashka, a mighty force of death and undeath. Lashonna and Dragotha are both former agents of the Chamber corrupted by Kyuss' necromantic powers, and this is the basis for the existence of the vampiric dragon. Lashonna was once a powerful force for light, and a spark of that spirit still exists within her, but it is overshadowed by the darkness in her soul and her lust for power. The Chamber believes that Lashonna is long dead, but in any case they cannot directly intervene; the course of the Age of Worms is in the hands of the heroes.

Darl Quethos, Hand of the Lich-Lord

In previous notes, Vecna has been identified as the Shadow. The Shadow, however, was never mortal, and has neither hand nor eye. As such, Darl Quethos is most effective as a priest of the Blood of Vol: a member of the inner circle of the faith, whose power rivals that of Erandis d'Vol herself. However, Darl Quethos considers himself to be Vol's equal, and he looks beyond Erandis to one of the roots of the religion—the ancient study of necromancy practiced by the Qabalrin elves of Xen'drik.

The Hand of Vecna is a remnant of a mighty Qabalrin necromancer, thought to have been the first humanoid lich on Eberron. It is up to the DM to decide whether to give this primal lich a new name, or whether to say that in Eberron, Vecna was the name of this lord of the Qabalrin. For more information about the Qabalrin, refer to "The Ring of Storms" in *Dungeon* #122.

Darl's companions are likewise allies of the Queen of Death; some believe in the teachings of the Blood of Vol, while others simply follow it as a path to power. Malhazar is an exile from the plane of Fernia. Nalhazzarath is a fiend from Shavarath who seeks to obscure his true name so he may return to the eternal battle without fear. The Sinfire Twins learned their deadly trade in the remote reaches of Sarlona; they are on the run from an order of assassins that predates humanity's arrival on Khorvaire.

The Order of the Storm

This druidic sect was established in the Ironroot Mountains. Dragons taught the druidic mysteries to the dwarves of the region, but the order itself has been long forgotten. This change means that the Wild Watchers should be depicted as fey dwarves; their statistics can remain unchanged, as they have essentially transcended their original humanoid natures.

Tilagos Island

As the location of the island is a mystery, there is no reason that it can't have precisely the same relationship to Alhaster as described in the adventure: it is a hidden isle off the coast of the Lhazaar Principalities.

Shipwreck Beach

The orc pirates are members of the Cloudreaver Principality, home to the bulk of Lhazaar's orcs. As a 16th-level fighter, Grogriss Spit-Eye is notably more powerful than the Cloudreaver Prince Mika; it's up to the DM to decide whether to enhance Mika's abilities, or if Grogriss simply lacks the support to challenge the weaker dwarf for leadership of the isle.

The Golden Belt

Titans are rare and legendary creatures; some say they are the progenitors of the giant races of Xen'drik. The tale of Krathanos can be used as it stands, but the titan came to Khorvaire almost three thousand years ago, when humanity was first settling the land. Even bardic knowledge won't reveal what happened to the titan; he simply disappeared, and the humans never knew that the Order of the Storm had bound him on their island keep. While the gods were not directly involved, Krathanos can keep his inscription; in his opinion, he could not be defeated without divine intervention.

If the party speaks with Krathanos, he presents himself as a servant of the war god Dol Dorn.

The Rift

In Eberron, the Rift becomes the Goradra Gap of the Mror Holds (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 193). There are many dark legends surrounding this last canyon; soon the adventurers will discover the terrible truth behind some of these legends.

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